

Kingsley Martin

The Triumph of Lord Palmerston

*A Study of Public Opinion in England
before the Crimean War*



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‘Under free institutions it is necessary occasionally to defer to the opinions of other people; and as other people are obviously in the wrong, this is a great hindrance to the improvement of our political system and the progress of our species.’

WALTER BAGEHOT

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INTRODUCTION

This book was written by an angry young man just forty years ago. He and his friends were angry for the reasons that make some writers angry today. In both cases the background is world war and the resentment of the younger generation at the mess handed to them by their elders whom they cannot be expected to regard as their betters.

In my undergraduate days at Cambridge our eager and incessant talk was geared to war. It coloured all our arguments about religion and psychology and the human condition and how to improve it. The 'guilty men'—in those days people said 'wicked old men'—who had muddled us into war were also muddling the peace in preparation for another. It was our job to stop it. Some of us were pacifists; I, for instance, had spent the last eighteen months of the war in France as an orderly in the Friends Ambulance Unit looking after wounded on an old French ambulance train. Some were tougher 'conchies' who had spent years in gaol. Others were demobbed soldiers who had been disillusioned about war more by class snobbery and staff incompetence than by lice, rats, mud, and German artillery.

We were all sure that Britain must never again be bamboozled by the slogans that smeared an idealistic unguent over its primitive brutality. Clearly the war had not been fought to make the world safe for democracy, to end war, establish righteousness on earth, or any of the fine objectives designed to encourage slaughter. We were particularly disdainful of the Churches, which in time of peace bade you love your enemies, only to turn themselves into recruiting platforms and tell you to plunge bayonets into their guts as soon as you had enemies

to love. We examined all this hypocrisy with a cool eye and discussed the realities of war largely in terms of Freud and Marx. We had not read much of either, but they provided exciting starting points for fresh lines of thought and perhaps for hopeful lines of action. The more we looked at the war, the more it resembled just a dog-fight between the Powers—a war for power or property, the outcome of anarchy. Would the dogs, as we were then being told, really put themselves and one another on a leash at Geneva? Or was the League just a trick? Would it merely provide new excuses for another imperialist war? Or, again, were the dogs not rather fighting for bones? Were the causes of war economic? Was war, as Lenin held, the outcome of imperialist rivalry? Must there be world revolution before there could be world peace?

This argument was to occupy the attention and stultify the influence of the intelligentsia for the next twenty years. Both the political and the economic analyses were, on their own level, true, but neither covered all the facts. The third view, used chiefly by conservatives, pessimists, and psychologists, clearly had some validity. Would not the dogs go on barking and biting even if the institutions at Geneva were impeccable, even if, alternatively, we had a world consisting of socialist states? In short, we had against us not only political anarchy, the class war, and the rivalries of imperialist states, but it seemed that we had to 'change human nature' or at least the pattern of human behaviour throughout the ages.

The usual answer of the Left was to point to the power of propaganda. Certainly we had just had sufficient experience of it in the war. Under dictatorships conscripts march because they can do no other, but the ghastly wastage of manpower at the front and the obstinate endurance of the ordinary citizen at home could not have been sustained in the democracies without a constant stream of doctored news, of idealistic lies, of false or exaggerated atrocity stories. We learnt about this propaganda from the spate of war memoirs that began to pour out from the Press and from such books as Ponsonby's *Truth in*

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Wartime. It was easy to conclude that the capitalist Press was the real villain of the piece. One of them certainly. But the explanation did not cover the facts. Why had so many people cheered when the war began? They accepted the propaganda so readily and so credulously. They seemed pleased to have an enemy and, though quickly disenchanted, were wonderfully ready to be heroes.

These discussions were responsible for my choice of subject when the chance came to do historical research. I decided to try to find out by detailed study of the origin of a particular war just how far it was 'inevitable' in a state of international anarchy; how far it was due to economic causes; and how far propaganda was necessary to persuade the people of a democracy that the only moral, decent, and Christian thing was to turn their ploughs into swords and their reaping hooks into cannon and, instead of repaying evil with goodness, form columns of platoons and march to death or glory. If it was propaganda that did the trick, why were so many proper geese ready to swallow it?

The first question was which war to study? There was no real choice. In 1922 none of the documents was available for study of the origin of the 1914-18 war even if I had been competent to work on them. Anyway, I had only six months for the thesis. The Boer War? That would have interested me, since my first memory was of our windows being broken by stones thrown by patriots who disapproved of my father's pacifist views. But the Foreign Office does not permit its secrets to be examined for fifty years, after which it is hoped that they will be stale enough to bore everyone except a few historians. So I settled on the only European war in which Britain had been engaged between Waterloo and 1914. One could read the memoirs, newspapers, and diplomatic papers before the Crimean War without either personal bias or official obstruction. Another advantage of choosing this mid-nineteenth-century war was that it occurred before the Powers had entered on the 'imperialist phase' and before the small-scale political Press of the

Mid-Victorians had turned into the mass-circulation commercial Press of the Northcliffe era.

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No knowledge of the period tarnished the virgin blankness of my mind when I began to read about the Crimean War. If I had been asked what I expected to find, I should probably have said that, on general principles, I must assume that the war was about the route to India, and that public opinion, which was said to have been strongly in favour of it, was manufactured by those who held that British interests demanded the weakening of Russia and the support of Turkey in Europe. In fact, I found that Russia and Britain agreed on the policy of maintaining a weak Turkey on the Bosphorus and that neither the memoirs nor the diplomatic papers of the period are much concerned with India or say anything about our imperialist mission. This was before the Mutiny, and twenty years before Disraeli brought the Queen from her retirement to wear the brightest jewel of the Empire in her crown. Finally, no historian has claimed that the war was 'necessary', that sooner or later it 'had to come' because the threat of Russia could not have been exorcized without war. The one thing about which the historians agreed was that the war was in some mysterious way created by 'public opinion'. After the book was published G. M. Trevelyan wrote to me one of those letters that a young writer cherishes all his life from a master of the craft. He remarked that his father, Sir George Otto Trevelyan, in his day a much respected historian, had said that there is a public ready for war every generation. It takes that long to get over the disillusion of the last. If we had not fought in the Crimea, he said, we should have gone to war for the Southern states against the North in the American Civil War less than ten years later.

My idea was to discover how it could happen, as the historians agreed it did happen, that a Cabinet, the majority of which was reluctant to enter into the war, was pushed into it

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by a mysterious force called 'public opinion'. Especially in a case where, clearly, most people were far too ignorant to have anything which could be called an opinion. I wrote:

'It is a curious picture. In a palace on the Bosphorus sat the Sultan, a fleshy and irascible debauchee, usually intoxicated and always lethargic, surrounded by a group of Mohammedan fanatics of whose plots to supplant him he was dimly aware and whose ability to rouse the fury of priest-ridden mobs kept him in abject terror and peevish submission. In England were public halls, crowded with respectable shopkeepers, evangelical maiden ladies, and stolid artisans enthusiastically proffering their lives and money in the service of this obese little tyrant in a fez, whose name they could not pronounce and whose habits of life were as unknown to them as those of a prehistoric monster.'

By reading the Cabinet documents, the letters of Ministers, the newspapers and diaries of the period, I found myself able to describe the steps by which this strange result was accomplished. The salient facts are these.

The year 1848 was 'the wonderful year' of 'revolutions' all over Europe. Britain—I mean the middle-class Britain which had taken over from the aristocracy with the Reform Bill of 1832 and which was seething with a working-class demand for further social change—was enthusiastically on the side of the French, German, Austrian, Hungarian, and other revolutionaries, and indignant about autocratic intervention, brutally organized to suppress the popular movement. Most of all they were moved by the eloquence of Kossuth, the Hungarian leader who escaped to Turkey when the Russians bloodily suppressed the Magyar revolution. That he was not then delivered up to the Turks by the Russians was attributed to Palmerston's dispatch of a gunboat to the Bosphorus. In the next few years Palmerston delighted the liberal British public by supporting, at least with well-timed verbal indiscretions, various continental revolutionaries—we should now call them middle-class patriots—to the disgust of the Queen and Prince Albert, who were naturally on the side of established monarchs. In 1851 they

persuaded Lord John Russell, then Prime Minister, to sack Palmerston from the Foreign Office on the ground of insubordination, and in 1853, when the next quarrel with the Tsar began, Palmerston was Home Secretary, instead of Foreign Secretary, in a coalition Government of which Lord Aberdeen was Prime Minister. The quarrel was not in itself important, but the British, anxious not to leave 'the progressive disintegration of Turkey' to be regulated by the Tsar alone, supported the Ottoman case when Russian troops occupied territory under Turkish rule.

The Tsar did not want to fight, nor did Aberdeen, nor for that matter did Palmerston. But Palmerston believed that once again a strong policy would bring the Tsar to heel. The great mass of vocal public opinion agreed with him. He dictated leading articles which appeared in the *Morning Post*, whose editor was his personal friend. His chief opponent in the Press was *The Times*, then edited by the famous Delane. It had a circulation of over 50,000, far the largest in England at that time. Like the Prime Minister, Delane thought it absurd to go to war, especially when, after months of complex negotiations, the Tsar actually agreed to withdraw on terms which the Powers themselves suggested. Only the Turks, encouraged by Stratford de Redcliffe, Britain's powerful ambassador at the Porte, were ready to fight. Two things finally prevented a settlement—a naval incident at Sinope, in which Turkish ships were sunk, though they were supposed to be under the protection of the British Navy, and the resignation of Palmerston from the Government at the critical moment. The public was infuriated by what it regarded as a national humiliation, and assumed that Palmerston, who resigned from the Government—ostensibly on quite another issue—had again been sacrificed to Court prejudice. In response to popular clamour, Palmerston was returned to office; it was widely believed that Prince Albert had been sent to the Tower for treachery. The Queen, in fact, was so outraged by newspaper abuse of Albert that she repeatedly threatened to abdicate—a fact which I discovered

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just seventy years later when I read some of her unpublished correspondence with Lord Aberdeen.

You see what had happened. A totally untrue picture of the situation had been painted in the public imagination. It is not far-fetched, I think, to compare this illusion in the minds of some thousands of people with illusions which most people in some degree individually suffer from, even though they may discover them only if they are psychoanalysed. As children, they go through experiences which set a mental pattern about, shall we say, the autocratic behaviour of their fathers; it is with great difficulty that, as they grow up, they avoid identifying every older person who frustrates them with this image of the autocratic father-figure.

In this case the public—and that meant not readers of *The Times*, but the crowds who went to meetings and who may or may not have read a newspaper but probably had heard Kossuth make a speech—assumed that since the Tsar had in the past shown himself to be an enemy of freedom, it must be right to support a small nation against him, though it meant a war on behalf of an even more tyrannical and corrupt Government. Britain had not by any means always been in alliance against Russia; indeed, the Tsar had been our ally against Napoleon and we had co-operated in the War of Greek Independence. But, as an American historian has shown, Russia was already a symbol of cruelty and oppression, a stereotype of tyranny in the British mind, twenty years before the events described in this book. Mr. Gleason's study has, in fact, confirmed my thesis by pointing out that the 'solidification of a hostile stereotype with regard to Russia occurred in 1853 as rapidly as it did only because its mould had been established two decades before'.

When war began in 1854 a few voices, notably the golden voice of John Bright, courageously maintained a minority point of view, but the parsons preached war from pulpits of all Christian denominations, except the Quakers, and so did almost all the men of letters who had influence with the public.

Astonishingly, this war in support of Islamic Turkey became 'a war for Christianity'. Quite simply, said a pamphleteer, Christianity was justice, and since this was a just war, it was also Christian. Writers like Charles Kingsley declared it was a war between God and the Tsar, and Tennyson wrote in one of his most famous poems thanking God that 'the long, long canker of peace is over'.

To the ordinary Englishman, the luckless soldiers who died without medical aid and starved and froze through the incompetence and dishonesty of politicians and contractors were not only brave men upholding the glory of Britain, they were also dying for freedom in a battle for the freedom of the Poles and Hungarians. They saw the war as a struggle for democracy against tyranny. Precisely the same image was repeated in 1914 when the Kaiser with his steel-helmeted cavalry took the place of the Tsar with his knout and Belgium filled the rôle of Turkey. Once again a small nation was being ravished by the jack-booted satanic figure, and John Bull, plucky little fellow, took off his coat and dashed to the defence of the virtuous maiden. 'What Englishmen condemn,' writes Mr. F. W. Simpson, 'is almost always worthy of condemnation—if only it has happened.'

My concern in this book was to analyse the psychological mechanism of war fever. We all live in constant awareness of a highly coloured moving picture; we watch a three-dimensional cinerama. In our own immediate domestic surroundings we are aware of the details, and act, if not necessarily with wisdom, at least as a result of intimate and direct contact with events. Beyond that, less distinct but still detailed, we are conscious of our village, trade union, professional, and national environments; our world picture is the least distinct and precise, but not for that reason incapable of arousing in us a high degree of emotional response whenever it seems to affect the security or interests of our own group. Because of our essential ignorance of other nations, we are far more easily swayed by propaganda in national than we are in domestic disputes. At any time we

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can be switched to the belief that a country, which we regard as friendly, has become our enemy. A few selected incidents of atrocities may create a picture which will compel us to quite irrational action. In the nineteenth-century issue I have chosen, an extraordinarily rapid switch took place. The public, accustomed to believe in the traditional enmity of France, was actually in a state of alarm about a supposed plan of invasion by Napoleon III, who must, it was thought, be dangerous, since he had the same name and was in fact a near relative of the conqueror of Europe who had been defeated forty years before at the battle of Waterloo. Yet in the course of a few weeks the public was persuaded that Napoleon III was our disinterested ally in a war against the wicked Tsar.

This story of rotating allies and enemies can be repeated in almost every decade. In the seventies the two principal leaders of opinion, Gladstone and Disraeli, disagreed about who the enemy was; both the Russians and the Turks had committed atrocities; and a diplomatic case could be built up for the support or opposition to either of them. We avoided that war because our leaders cancelled each other out. Again we seemed to be on the eve of war with the French in 1899 when Joseph Chamberlain was seeking an alliance with Germany. In the event, for reasons of the balance of power, we became members of the Triple Entente and were able to patch up our colonial differences with the French and so became enemies of the Germans with whom for centuries we had been on good terms.

The story of our changing feelings towards Russia would make an amusing book. Until we became indirectly Russia's ally early in this century, the prevailing image of Russia was that of a cruel autocracy governing a vast horde of barbaric peasants (they were called 'Scythian hordes' in 1854 just as the Germans were called Huns in the 1914-18 war!). After 1904 these peasants were represented as hospitable, gentle, and soulful mystics, living close to the soil, and therefore, of course, close to God; when war began in 1914 they formed a gigantic steam-roller which would roll the German armies into the Baltic—

until it was discovered that it was in fact rolling backwards, not forwards. When Russia made peace under Lenin's leadership they were again called barbarians. But this time they were far worse. The cartoonists and journalists and politicians showed them as ogreish figures with bombs in their hands and knives dripping with blood in their mouths. This picture lasted until they were again willy-nilly our allies in 1941 and at Stalingrad they were all heroes. Unhappily, after 1945, they returned to their bad old ways, and they have been incorrigible ever since.

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Mountains of facts have been excavated about this period since I wrote and much that is important and illuminating has been written about the Press and the politicians about whom I was so youthfully censorious. We know, for instance, that Palmerston took an even more active part than I had supposed in influencing opposition newspapers. The careers and influence of personalities like David Urquhart, whose fanaticism enabled him to believe—and convince others—that Palmerston was in the Tsar's pay, have been far more fully explored and described by historians, and Professor Aspinall has made a thorough study of the Press during the early Victorian period. But I am assured by professional historians—Professor Asa Briggs and Mr. G. M. Foot have been especially kind in re-reading this book—that nothing has been discovered that in any way invalidates my analysis of this illuminating slice of history.

In one respect it was, I think, ahead of its time. Newspapers had often been used by historians as secondary source material. They had been regarded as important because they confirmed or cast doubt on other sources of information. They are quoted to 'illustrate' the climate of contemporary thought. My notion was different. If public opinion was a decisive factor in making the war, then newspapers were primary source material; they were an active agency of diplomacy and the events could not

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be understood without studying not what happened but what people thought had happened. It was the image of events, not the diplomatic papers, that provided the key. I can see some comparison here with the discovery in the late nineteenth century of economic history as an underlying current on which political history floated. Just as we nowadays recognize that there are unconscious drives which may be more important than the consciously admitted motives of the hero whose biography we are writing, so it may be that the irrational force of public opinion explains much that has puzzled historians. In that case, the Crimean War is just a particularly good example of a common phenomenon.

Nineteenth-century democratic theory inherited assumptions about public opinion that were far too rational even when applied to an electorate of a few thousands and which are ludicrously so when applied to a population of millions. It was natural for the fathers of democracy to assume that when feudal oligarchy was overthrown, when education was general, the vote widely distributed, and the Press freed from censorship and taxation, the newly liberated citizen would be rationally interested in public welfare. Thus, Thomas Jefferson was sure that the small landowning farmer would be especially endowed with inspired sagacity. All he needed to govern well was accurate information. 'Were it left to him,' wrote Jefferson, 'to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, he should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.' Brooding on this piece of American optimism, I consulted the works of Jeremy Bentham, more than anyone the father of British democracy. He was not a mystic or farmer. He was, however, inspired to a similar optimism about the average man in Britain. He prophesied that when the Press should be freed from the legal restrictions which fettered its natural development, the editor of a prominent newspaper would become the 'President of a Public Opinion Tribunal', to which all politicians and public servants would be forced to render account. Of public opinion

he wrote: 'Able rulers lead it; prudent rulers lead or follow it; foolish leaders disregard it. Even at the present stage in the career of civilization its dictates coincide, on most points, with those of the *greatest happiness principle*; on some, however, it still deviates from them; but, as its deviations have all along been less and less numerous and less wide, sooner or later they will cease to be discernible, abhorration will vanish, coincidence will be complete.'

The stumbling blocks which Bentham saw in the way of this happy conclusion have been removed: the taxes on knowledge have been repealed and the franchise granted to a public enlightened by a standard education and informed by an ample newspaper service. There is no need today to enlarge on the reasons why, in spite of these democratic victories, the gap between 'what the public wants' and 'the greatest happiness principle' has not, in fact, been closed. Men are much less political animals than our liberal forefathers assumed and they prefer what is pleasing to what is true. Moreover, the size of the civilized world has grown to a point at which we all act and vote on information which comes to us second or tenth hand and is selected for a commercial or a politically interested reason. Thus, Walter Lippmann wrote forty years ago, 'in putting together our public opinion not only do we have to picture more space than we can see with our eyes, and more time than we can feel, but we have to describe and judge more people, more action, more things than we can ever count or vividly imagine. We have to summarize and generalize. We have to pick samples, and treat them as typical.' Moreover, as we already possess a standard morality and conventional idea of what the world is like, new facts must somehow be forced, with as little readjustment as possible, into our accepted picture. Thus, a public opinion is not a moral judgment on a group of facts, but a 'moralized and codified version of the facts'.

It can indeed be said that such a thing as public opinion rarely exists since the phrase implies some sort of rational

judgment about public events, whereas it is far more common to find only uninformed emotion about public events, in contrast to our comparatively rational judgments about private affairs. In short, there are public emotions and private opinions; seldom public opinions. In normal conditions, of course, many public views, however irrationally held, compete and change under constant readjustment. The one exception is war, when the minority opinion is usually so small that it may be neglected. The popular picture of the world is set and vivid and the response virtually unanimous. In a democracy the people enter war willingly, moved by generous passion, to avenge injustice or protect the weak. The war must appear a battle between right and might. In analysing this phenomenon we have now learnt, if not much that is new, at any rate to recognize and give names to processes that used not to be identified. We know quite a lot about 'projection' and 'paranoia'; maybe the use of these new words helps us to understand why for a time in 1854 we were sure that the Sultan of Turkey was a great and enlightened ruler and the Tsar, when he died, was compared to Satan falling from heaven. People who have been brought up to believe that it is wrong to lie and to kill need to believe in the unblemished purity of their cause and in the absolute necessity of fighting for it if they are not to be inhibited by a guilty conscience when they form a herd for the purpose of mass slaughter.

A superficial comparison can be made between the period before the Crimean War and that which preceded the war with Germany in 1939. It is tempting to compare Aberdeen, the defeated peacemaker, with Chamberlain, and Palmerston, the tough traditional John Bull, with Winston Churchill, who also took charge when appeasement failed. A. J. P. Taylor, rash and illuminating as usual, has compared Aberdeen's and Chamberlain's efforts at appeasement. He remarked that the tough policy of Palmerston and Lord John Russell would have prevented war—which may or may not be true, we cannot tell—and that 'the responsibility for the war lay with the pacific

Aberdeen' which Aberdeen himself 'admitted'. This seems to imply that Aberdeen admitted that his pacifism had been a mistake. In fact, he said that 'all wars were called or pretended to be defensive' and that 'if he had misgivings about British policy it is certainly not that we have been too pacific'. On the contrary, he believed that there had been two or three occasions when war might have been prevented and peace 'honourably and advantageously secured' if he had dug his heels in and resisted not the Tsar but his more belligerent colleagues in Downing Street. As war went on, he wrote in a letter to John Bright, he felt as if every drop of blood that had been shed was upon his head. After his death the pathetic fact was revealed that he had refused to repair a ruined church on his estates, feeling that, like King David, he was forbidden to rebuild a house in the Lord's name because he had 'shed blood abundantly and made a great war'.

The comparison with Chamberlain must not be pressed, for there is no evidence, as far as I know, that Chamberlain reproached himself for abandoning his appeasement policy in deference to public opinion. If we were to try—Mr. Taylor wisely refrains—to compare Churchill with Palmerston we should have first to notice that Churchill outside the Government was in a position openly to appeal for support, while Palmerston was flagrantly disloyal to the Premier and Government of which he was a member. As for the public during the two periods, the great difference is that it insisted on war in 1854 under a complete misapprehension about the issues involved and did not realize that the dispute with the Tsar was settled when he withdrew his fleet from the Black Sea. In contrast it seems likely that the appeasement policy of Chamberlain was, in any case, doomed to failure because of the nature of the Nazi regime.

When it comes to assessing consequences, historians are always in a quandary, though they do not always realize it or admit it. An event of the magnitude of a war between the great Powers obviously affects everything that follows; the historians

pick and choose what to emphasize according to their own predilections and in accordance with the time at which they are writing. What looks like triumph today is written off as defeat tomorrow and we mourn one year what we celebrate a generation later. The Crimean War ended inconclusively; the public indeed would have preferred for it to continue until it had achieved something to celebrate as victory. But the next generation tended to agree with Lord Salisbury that in supporting the Turks we had backed the wrong horse. A historical generation later, however, we find that the war is being defended by F. W. Reddaway. 'Not for the first time,' he wrote, 'the nation rendered vocal by its Press, pronounced a clearer judgment than its statesmen about the rights and wrongs of humanity.' An instinctive morality forbade us from doing anything so wicked as postponing the Turkish issue, allowing Russia to settle it in its own way, or agreeing to partition power in the Bosphorus with the Tsar. Russia, he adds, 'knew no limit to its destiny'; apart from our intervention, the Balkan States would have been quickly engulfed in the empire of the Tsar. In our generation, a sharper-minded historian, A. J. P. Taylor, also takes the view that there was in fact a cold war between the Russian autocracy and the liberal West and points out that the war's one certain result was so to weaken Russia that Europe was 'remade' in the second half of the century without interference by the Tsar. In 1848 Russia had intervened; after the Crimean War Cavour and Bismarck could unify Italy and Germany whether Russia liked it or not. One permanent result of the war was the creation of an independent Roumania, which meant that the mouth of the Danube was freed from Austrian or Russian control. At the time the most important result of the war was supposed to be that the Russians were kept out of the Black Sea. This lasted until 1878. Aptly recalling the comparable case of Hitler reoccupying the Rhineland in 1936, Mr. Taylor remarks that a treaty of peace 'can only define the conditions of the present; it cannot bind the future'. He adds, however, that the Crimean War 'brought real gains

to the British. The Balance of Power in Europe was strengthened, not overthrown; and Great Britain did not need to intervene in the Continental war for sixty years thereafter. Two generations of peace are something to be thankful for; it is more than we have had in our lifetime.'

This is a gallant attempt to illustrate Lord Acton's dictum that the 'first lesson of history is the good of evil'. By the same token the second lesson is the evil of good. How brilliantly Mr. Taylor in another mood would have discoursed on the sheer disaster to Britain of a war which enabled Prussia to unify Germany without interference from us or from Russia! In fact, Britain stood aside from European politics and avoided entanglement in continental wars because she was intent on imperial expansion and engaged in a whole series of wars in Asia and Africa. So far from having benefited by weakening Russia and thus restoring the balance of power, we created a far more dangerous unbalance and had to fight two devastating wars against the greater Germany whose advance we had done so much to facilitate. The balance that emerged from the second of our last two attempts to restore it had put the power into the hands of two giants, while we have become a small and dependent island now reduced to seeking refuge in a federation dominated by Germany. Of the various justifications that can be found for the wars of history none is so precarious or illusory as the maintenance of the balance of power. It is a will o' the wisp which leads historians as well as statesmen into fathomless bogs.

KINGSLEY MARTIN

I

'A Just but Unnecessary War'

THE PROBLEM

IN March 1854 the British Government declared war upon Russia. The Cabinet which took this step was as pacific as any that has ever held office in England. Moreover, the Prime Minister himself had formerly been on terms of cordial intimacy with the Tsar, while the majority of the Cabinet agreed with him in regarding Turkey, for whose 'independence and integrity' many said we were fighting, as a crumbling relic of barbarism, whose existence in Christian Europe could not in any case long continue. For the rest, the Cabinet seemed to be divided upon every issue except the desirability of peace; yet they were soon to be unanimous for war, and supported in their decision by their bitterest adversaries.

There can be no doubt, also, that the bulk of English political opinion was strongly in favour of war with Russia. This seems more strange when we remember that our ally against the Tsar was Napoleon III, with whom it had seemed, but a few months before, we were likely to be at war. He had been execrated by almost every section of political opinion—by the Court as a 'parvenu', by statesmen as an adventurer, by Conservatives as an exponent of the revolutionary nationalism of his uncle, by Liberals and Radicals as the treacherous author of a *coup d'état*. Less than a year before he was believed to be on the point of invading England.

Finally, the Cabinet, which for months had been negotiating for an alliance with Austria, upon which success against Russia depended, were in so great a hurry to declare war that they did so without waiting for Austria's pledge of support. Nor was this

final breakdown of negotiations due to any clear issue on which agreement could not be reached. There was no deadlock. No vital question had arisen which diplomacy could not have settled if the temper of earlier discussions had been preserved. There was no immediate danger to the British Empire and, at first sight, no reason appears why war should have been declared in March 1854 rather than at almost any other moment during the preceding nine months. Further, the war itself did not bring its object any more clearly into light, for, as Lytton Strachey says, 'its end seemed as difficult to account for as its beginning'.

Disraeli said that it was 'a just but unnecessary war', and if justice consists in making war on monarchs who endanger peace, we must agree with him. For the one point on which there has been complete agreement among all parties is that the Tsar was rash and impolitic. There was much justification for the popular view that Nicholas was an undesirable person. Though no doubt wishing to extend his possessions in the south, there is every indication that he intended to do so only with the concurrence of England. He did not want war. He had shown, during the negotiations, an increasing willingness to abandon his earlier demands for the sake of peace. 'It can be truly said,' writes Lord Stanmore, 'that the war was undertaken to resist an attack which was never threatened and probably never contemplated.'

The origin of the Crimean War, therefore, has always remained something of a mystery, and historians have not found the lengthy diplomatic correspondence which preceded it sufficient either to explain its objects or to demonstrate its necessity. During the months in which a way of peace was earnestly sought there were several occasions when the negotiations were on the very point of success: on each of these some unexpected event occurred to prevent a settlement. 'It seems,' said Lord Aberdeen, 'as if some fatal influence must be at work.' Strangely enough, the fatal influence often proceeded from the negotiators themselves. Could it really be that some

‘A JUST BUT UNNECESSARY WAR’

malignant demon was delighting not only in throwing obstacles in the way of the peace of Europe, but also in inspiring the peacemakers themselves with the madness of Heracles so that they destroyed their own offspring?

Historians, looking for a more conventional explanation, have been led to single out for blame one or other of the chief actors on the European stage. The Tsar, the Sultan, Lord Aberdeen, Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, Louis Napoleon, and Lord Palmerston have all been condemned as the authors of the war. But in no case has this creation of a scapegoat been found sufficient in itself. In the last resort, the case against the individual breaks down, and the accused can cry out in triumph to the peoples of Europe: ‘I did not create the war: you wanted it. I was your mouthpiece. Blame public opinion.’ ‘Whatever influence Palmerston possessed,’ one authority tells us, ‘he owed partly to his knowledge of foreign affairs, but far more to his inborn sympathy with the nation. *It was they, not he or any other man, who really made the war.*’

Thus the historian has learnt to use public opinion as the final mystery, and when the plot is too thickly entangled and the characters all seem mere puppets, helpless in the midst of great events, public opinion is discovered as the *deus ex machina*—mystic, impalpable, and unexplained. It has taken its place as the latest recruit in a long line of similar deities. ‘Economic necessity’ no longer carries easy conviction, even ‘national character’ is insufficient; no longer may we comfortably attribute man’s backslidings to an all-wise Providence, nor adopt the equally simple expedient of Voltaire and summon ‘Chance’ to cut the knot we fail to disentangle. Therefore, we personify public opinion.

Perhaps Kinglake best demonstrates this tendency to speak of the public as a single individual whose ratiocinations explain the otherwise inexplicable; but later historians of a less picturesque turn of mind have indulged the same weakness. We may take the incident of Sinope as an appropriate instance. On November 30th, 1853, some Turkish ships were destroyed by a

larger squadron of the Russian fleet. Russia and Turkey were formally at war, and the event was a normal naval disaster. Historians have for the most part agreed that it was this event which, for some unexplained reason, so excited opinion in England and France that peace became impossible. 'But for the catastrophe of Sinope,' writes Stanmore, 'peace between England and Russia would have remained unbroken'; and he explains that its importance lay in its effect on the public. Kinglake declares that when Englishmen came to know of the catastrophe of Sinope (under a misapprehension that it was a 'treacherous slaughter') 'they were inflamed with a desire to execute justice', although the 'conscience of the nation was sound and men were as well convinced as ever of the wickedness of a war wrongfully or wantonly incurred'. Sir Spencer Walpole tells us that 'opinion in neither capital stopped to inquire whether the attack had been caused by the hostile action of the Western Powers', and G. M. Trevelyan remarks that the 'British public *chose* to call the affair the "massacre of Sinope" '.

Now these statements are not in themselves untrue; they are merely the shorthand of everyday speech introduced into historical writing. They represent not the misstatement of a problem, but its evasion. For if, as is certainly the case, public opinion was one of the most potent factors in bringing about a European war, some sort of analysis and inquiry into its nature is surely essential. Public opinion, after all, does not declare war, write dispatches, or mobilize troops: if these things were done by its influence there must have been channels through which it worked.

Public opinion is a collective term which can only be accurately used to denote a common opinion relative to some one defined issue held by an effective majority in a certain group of persons. Public opinion does not 'do' anything; it either exists or it does not exist. It exists in those cases where in a specified group those who differ from the majority as to the advisability of a certain action are so few or so ineffective as to be negligible.

Accordingly, in this essay, there are two problems before us. The first is to discover why there was for a few months an English public opinion in favour of war. How came it that the common indifference to foreign affairs disappeared and the usual variety of opinion became transformed into a single emotion directed towards the same object?

There is a second problem. In what way did the various conflicting views of the Eastern Question affect the course of diplomacy during the earlier negotiations; and during the later period, when it is accurate to speak of the existence of a public opinion in favour of war, by what machinery came it about that this voice of the people became the diplomatic voice of the State? How was public opinion made effective?

Before proceeding to the detailed answers of these questions it will be convenient to make a formal statement of the negotiations to which the latter part of the essay must constantly refer. Such an account, written primarily for purposes of reference, must be as short, clear, and colourless as its lengthy, complex, and controversial nature allows.

THE NEGOTIATIONS

(March 1853–March 1854)

During the long negotiations which finally resulted in the Crimean War, the question at issue was the extent to which any European Power, or group of Powers, might exert influence over the policy and administration of Turkey. It was almost axiomatic among the diplomatists of Europe that internal dissensions would break up the Ottoman Empire in the near future, unless it was supported from the outside. Politicians, therefore, discussed whether this outside support should be given in exchange for promises of reform on the part of the Sultan, or, whether, on the other hand, a partition of Turkey would be the most satisfactory method of settlement. The ‘integrity and independence of the Ottoman Empire’ was a phrase chiefly reserved for public speeches. ‘No form of words

could have been chosen more grotesquely inconsistent with the notorious facts of the case,' wrote one member of the Aberdeen Cabinet. No statesman believed that Turkey could be free from foreign interference. The phrase, if it meant anything, suggested 'that Turkey was so weak that her integrity and her dependence could exist, even nominally, only on condition of the European Powers agreeing to abstain from separate attacks, and of their acknowledging among themselves that this should be held a common and a binding obligation'.

From the Treaty of Kainardji in 1774 onwards, the internal administration of Turkey had been a matter of international agreements and of international rivalries. A series of conventions had dealt with the questions of the transit of the Dardanelles and the treatment of Christians in the Ottoman Empire. Diplomats were under no delusion that these questions were finally settled, and when, in 1844, the Tsar visited England, he had discussed at length with Sir Robert Peel, the Duke of Wellington, and Lord Aberdeen the probable dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the need for Anglo-Russian agreement if it should be 'foreseen that it must crumble to pieces'. A secret Memorandum, embodying the result of these conversations, was afterwards approved by the British Government and was seen by each succeeding Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. In view of this knowledge, and the fact that Aberdeen had been especially complaisant at the prospect of Turkish disruption, the Tsar had perhaps some justification for expecting the newly formed Aberdeen Government of December 1852 to be favourable to a renewal of his overtures.¹ It seemed, indeed, a propitious moment for again approaching the British Government. Accordingly, in January 1853 Sir George Seymour, British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, had to report a remarkable conversation which he had held with the

¹ This secret Memorandum had been originally drawn up by Count Nesselrode on the occasion of his visit to England, 'for the sole purpose of bathing at Brighton'. It had been finally drafted by Brunnov with the approval of both Aberdeen and the Tsar. Copies were placed in the archives both at St. Petersburg and London. It was, however, never a *signed* agreement as Malmesbury states in *Memoirs of an ex-Minister. An Autobiography*, 2 vols. (1884).

Tsar concerning the condition of Turkey. ‘We have on our hands,’ he said, ‘a sick man, a very sick man: it will be, I tell you frankly, a great misfortune if one of these days he should slip away from us, especially before all necessary arrangements are made.’ The Tsar reminded Sir George Seymour of his conversation with the Duke of Wellington in 1844, and hinted that Lord Aberdeen’s premiership would be a good opportunity for making more definite arrangements for the partition of the sick man’s goods. Aberdeen, while agreeing that Turkey was in a peculiar condition, saw no immediate reason for anticipating evil but, in view of the 1844 Memorandum, felt no surprise at the Tsar’s remarks.

That some readjustment in the Ottoman Empire was soon to take place was made clear in February by the appointment of Prince Menschikoff to an extraordinary embassy at Constantinople. He arrived early in March and opened his mission by insulting the Turkish Minister, Fuad Effendi. There was, however, nothing surprising in the mission itself: Count Leiningen had but lately returned from a similar mission on which he had demanded, on behalf of Austria, the withdrawal of a Turkish general from Montenegro. Moreover, Russia had an undoubted grievance at Constantinople. In a dispute concerning the rights of Greek and Latin Christians in the Holy Land, Turkey had, as usual, promised much to both France and Russia, but, while she had kept her word to Louis Napoleon, she had admittedly failed to fulfil her obligations to the Greek Christians. Lord John Russell, who was acting temporarily as Foreign Secretary, was assured by Brunnow, the Russian Ambassador in London, that Prince Menschikoff intended to demand only the fulfilment of Russia’s treaty rights; since, however, it was clear that important negotiations would proceed at Constantinople, Lord Stratford de Redcliffe was once more dispatched as ambassador to the Porte.

On his arrival, Lord Stratford at once re-established his unique influence over the Turkish administration, and was largely instrumental in persuading Turkey to give way at once

to those demands of Prince Menschikoff which concerned the Holy Places. But Prince Menschikoff had also made another suggestion which Lord Stratford regarded as unjustifiable. He demanded for Russia a definite statement of her right to 'protect' the Greek Christians in the Ottoman Empire. What exactly this 'protection' meant it was, and still is, impossible to say. France exercised some kind of protectorate over the Catholics under Turkish rule: the Tsar declared that he demanded only a restatement of his rights, often admitted by treaty, to a similar protection over the Greek Christians. But whereas the French protectorate affected only a few thousands, the Russian would affect almost as many millions. To the Western Powers this seemed to make the Russian demands dangerous and unjustifiable. Lord Stratford even declared that France could, with equal reason, demand a protectorate over British Catholic subjects in Ireland. To the Tsar, on the other hand, the large number of Greek Christians under the Sultan's Government merely made his obligation to protect them the more obvious. There was, moreover, no doubt that by treaty he possessed some rights of protection: the question was how far these rights extended.

In May, Count Nesselrode wrote of 'the fact of the sympathy and the community of interests which attach our population of fifty millions to the twelve millions and more which comprise the majority of the Sultan's subjects'. 'However distressing,' he continued, 'this fact may be to those whom our influence alarms, it is still not less a fact.'

The Porte, in accordance with Lord Stratford's advice, refused to admit any such Russian protectorate, and, in May, Prince Menschikoff, whose behaviour had from the first been arrogant and insulting, after delivering his demands in the form of an ultimatum, left the Porte with much show of anger. This result was a diplomatic victory for Lord Stratford, and as such alone was intensely irritating to the Tsar.¹

¹ Clarendon, as early as June 7th, admitted that it was Stratford's presence which prevented a settlement.

The meaning of the word ‘protectorate’ and the extent of Russia’s legal claims should have been matters for diplomatic discussion. Prince Menschikoff’s behaviour had already made them a menace to peace, and, early in June, the Tsar proceeded to make the situation far more serious by dispatching troops across the Pruth into Wallachia and Moldavia. The Principalities were the property of Turkey, and it was only under certain unfulfilled conditions that Russia had the right to occupy them.¹ The Tsar now claimed that he was justified in holding the Principalities as guarantees (without any further hostilities) until Turkey should see fit to fulfil her treaty obligations. His action was both illegal and impolitic. Unfortunately, France and England had by this time also taken steps which, though less serious than that of the Tsar, were almost equally inimical to the cause of peace.

When Prince Menschikoff had first gone to Constantinople and had opened his negotiations by refusing to honour Fuad Effendi, the Turkish Minister, Louis Napoleon had dispatched his fleet to Salamis. This was the first threat offered by either side, and the British Government was ‘inclined to attribute this unwise proceeding to the vanity of the French, their passion for doing something, and above all the inexperience and want of *savoir faire* in high matters of diplomacy of the Emperor and his Ministers’. The Cabinet therefore approved the action of Admiral Dundas in refusing the suggestion of Colonel Rose, chargé at Constantinople, that he should co-operate with the French fleet in its first movement of hostility to Russia.

But the British Government did not continue this pacific policy, and early in June our fleet was also dispatched to the entrance of the Dardanelles, and Lord Stratford was empowered to call it to Turkey’s assistance in case of need. This event took place at the very time that the Russian troops were crossing the Pruth, and was not, as Count Nesselrode suggested, the cause of the Tsar’s violation of Turkish territory. It is

¹ By the Treaty of Adrianople in 1829 the Principalities were under Turkish sovereignty but were ‘guaranteed’ by Russia.

equally clear that our advance was not made in answer to Russia's; in fact, the actions were taken each in anticipation of the other, and both made the likelihood of a peaceful solution to a diplomatic question less probable.

On the Russian side the invasion of the Principalities had the effect of bringing Austria and Prussia into the quarrel and putting the Tsar in the wrong, irrespective of the merits of his claims upon Turkey: on the British and French side the movement of our fleet involved us in a Turkish quarrel, though the questions which directly affected our interests there had been settled. The question of peace and war now depended on concerted action by the allies, and the avoidance of any further movements which could prevent the diplomatic issue receiving the cool consideration of statesmen.

In July, therefore, the Four Powers (England, France, Austria, and Prussia) submitted to the Russian Government a Note which their representatives had drawn up at Vienna. It was supposed by them to guarantee Russia's rights at the Porte while at the same time ensuring the Sultan's sovereignty. It was immediately accepted by the Tsar, and early in August the whole question seemed to be at an end.

Unfortunately, though drawn up on Turkey's behalf, the Note had not been submitted to Turkey, and the Porte, when asked to accept it, refused unless certain modifications were introduced. These modifications did not at first seem important. The Vienna Note had been diplomatically vague. Turkey wished to define certain points more clearly. Russia, by the Treaties of Kainardji and Adrianople, had a limited right of interference in certain specified provinces. Turkey insisted that Menschikoff's suggestion, that 'the Orthodox Church and clergy throughout the Sultan's dominions are to be secured in the possession of all the rights, privileges, and immunities which they have enjoyed *ab antiquo*', could not be admitted. A clause of this sort seemed to justify the Tsar in regarding all specially conferred rights of protection as continuous, and liable to extension over all Greek Christians under the Sultan's

rule, and not merely over those districts where any specific difficulty had at first arisen. The Sultan denied the Tsar's right to this universal protection, and therefore suggested a few verbal alterations in the Vienna Note which would make this distinction clear. Unfortunately, the Tsar had accepted the Vienna Note on condition that it remained exactly as it was presented to him, and, perhaps naturally, refused to accept modifications of terms which had been presented to him as final. Moreover, he believed that the modifications had been suggested to the Porte by his opponent, Lord Stratford. It was now an open question whether England and France would support Turkey in her refusal to accept the terms drawn up for her. There seemed at one moment a probability that England would recall Stratford and compel Turkey to accept the Vienna Note in an unmodified form. This solution of the difficulty was made impossible by a singular accident. A private dispatch, written by Count Nesselrode, found its way into a Berlin paper. This dispatch showed that the Vienna Note, according to the Russian interpretation, left her the right of intervention to protect the Orthodox in Turkey. This the allies had not intended explicitly to admit, and Turkey therefore seemed justified in her demand for modifications. In September, therefore, the Vienna Note was reluctantly abandoned, and the negotiations began once more from the beginning.

The publication of Count Nesselrode's dispatch had a further unfortunate effect; it prevented the British Cabinet, much to Lord Aberdeen's subsequent regret, from considering with due care a counter-offer made by the Tsar. Immediately after the abandonment of the Vienna Note the Tsar paid a visit to Olmütz, where he met the Austrian Emperor and gave a private interview to the British Ambassador, Lord Westmorland. The Tsar's manner was extremely conciliatory, and he offered, if the British Government would enforce the Vienna Note, to issue a declaration denying his right to the general interference feared by the Sultan.

In view of the fact that Nesselrode's dispatch had discredited

the Vienna Note, it was probably now impossible to enforce its terms on Turkey, even when accompanied by such a declaration. But the Russian offer made it amply possible to reopen negotiations on the basis of the Tsar's declaration, and it was the failure to do this that Lord Aberdeen so bitterly regretted.

Instead of responding to the Tsar's offer of conciliation, England took a further step towards actual hostilities. On September 23rd, news having reached England of disturbances at Constantinople, Stratford was ordered to send for the fleet to protect the Sultan from revolution and British subjects from loss of life and property. This was a violation of the treaty of 1841, which declared the neutrality of the Dardanelles. Questioned by Baron Brunnow, Clarendon explained that Russia's violation of neutral territory across the Pruth had destroyed the sanctity of the treaty of 1841. England was now definitely committed to aid Turkey. There was still hope that negotiations would settle differences if hostilities could be prevented between Turkey and Russia. But by the beginning of October, Turkey was in a warlike mood, and, though pressed by the allies not to jeopardize the negotiations, an ultimatum was sent to the Tsar and, on his refusal to evacuate the Principalities, Turkey declared war. The necessary difficulties of diplomacy were now increased by the excitement of actual hostilities, and the presence of the fleet in the Dardanelles made it impossible for the Tsar to regard the allies as neutral mediators.

A number of different Notes were drawn up during the autumn of 1853, and one, composed by Lord Stratford, was eventually decided upon for presentation to the Tsar. It is unlikely that any Note drafted by Stratford would have received the Tsar's approval, but by the time this final proposal reached St. Petersburg other outside events made its acceptance impossible.

The Tsar, therefore, dispatched a conciliatory ambassador, Count Orloff, to Vienna, with the double purpose, first of gaining Austria to his side in case of hostilities, and secondly of coming to terms with the allies if possible. Before his return to

Russia, Count Orloff made a suggestion which, if it had been examined on its merits, would have settled the whole dispute. He offered to present the gist of the allied terms as set forth in a protocol of January 13th to the Tsar, and to recommend him to send a Note from St. Petersburg embodying them. He also suggested that Dr. Meyendorff, the Russian Minister at Vienna, should be given authority to adopt any modifications which the Conference should deem necessary. This Note, when agreed upon by all the Powers, was to be sent to the Porte; an armistice was to follow its acceptance, and the immediate evacuation of the Principalities by Russia was to take place simultaneously with the withdrawal of the English and French fleets.

At this point, if we had only the diplomatic correspondence to go by, there would seem no reason why a settlement should not have been immediately reached. Yet we find that when the messenger from St. Petersburg brought a draft, conceived substantially in accordance with Count Vorloff's suggestion to Vienna, the allied representatives there had been in so great a hurry to end negotiations that they had already formulated an ultimatum and were on the point of dispatching it to the Tsar. An ultimatum demanding the immediate evacuation of other people's territory is, by a curious tradition of diplomacy, known to be equivalent to a declaration of war. The messenger was therefore 'retained till Monday' in order that the Tsar's terms could be examined, and in this way 'the reproach of having acted with precipitation' be avoided. The new proposals were hastily examined and pronounced 'inadmissible'. They were declared by the Council to be a 'snare, skilfully laid in order to produce division amongst us', and the ultimatum proceeded on its way to St. Petersburg.

What, then, were the differences between the allied terms and the Tsar's proposals which made them inadmissible? The principal differences were two: one was that the Tsar proposed to negotiate first and withdraw his troops from the Principalities when other questions had been settled, and the second, that he wished to treat directly with Turkey as to the details of

the treaty, and to arrange with her a place of meeting in Turkish or Russian territory. 'There,' according to the Russian official apologetic, 'lay the insurmountable obstacle.'

It might have seemed that the diplomats at Vienna could have solved these questions without a recourse to arms. The truth was that the Conference had already decided upon war unless Russia should surrender unconditionally. It is curious that the one point of importance at issue between the allies and Russia—that of direct negotiation with Turkey—was not considered the reason for the termination of diplomatic relations. Lord Cowley declared that Count Orloff's terms were inadmissible, first because Russia was likely to attack Constantinople, and secondly because discussion of them 'would destroy the Union of the Four Powers'. The terms, in fact, were not considered on their merits, and there is possibly some justice in the complaint of the Russian Government that 'the Porte had been asked on what conditions it would consent to make peace. The Conference approved these conditions, and communicated them to us. Was it forbidden to us to examine them and to express our opinion? Or was the Porte to be the sole arbiter in this debate?'

But if the object of this refusal to consider Russia's proposals was to ensure that the Four Powers should act together, the method adopted was singularly unfortunate. On the 23rd and 24th of February, Clarendon telegraphed to Vienna and Berlin, asking whether Austria and Prussia would join with England and France in demanding the evacuation of the Principalities and, further, what their policy would be in the event of Russia's refusal. Austria offered support to the ultimatum but did not pledge herself to a declaration of war, and Prussia cautiously replied that she 'would not oppose' a demand for evacuation. The ultimatum was immediately sent; Russia refused compliance, but neither Austria nor Prussia joined England and France in the declaration of war which followed.

It is clear that we must look to events outside the diplomatic correspondence to account for the failure of the negotiations.

War was begun not because a diplomatic deadlock had been reached, but because the negotiators had ceased to believe in the possibility of peace. The event which was primarily responsible for this change of attitude was the incident of Sinope. On November 30th a Turkish fleet, in defiance of the expressed wishes of the allies, had cruised in the Black Sea, and had been overtaken and destroyed by a larger Russian squadron.¹ It is difficult at first to see why this should have caused surprise: Turkey and Russia were officially at war, and though Russia had at first announced that she held the Principalities only as a guarantee and would commit no further aggression, she could claim that Turkey had already released her from this pledge by attacking the troops in the Principalities. But the British fleet was within a few miles of the battle, and it was clear that our action in sending our fleet into the Dardanelles had really committed us to protect Turkey. The British and French fleets therefore ‘invited’ the Russian fleet to withdraw into Sevastopol, and it was the news of this ultimatum which reached the Tsar at the same time as the Note drafted by Lord Stratford. Under these circumstances the Tsar inquired whether Turkey’s fleet was also to be asked to retire, and it was not until he discovered that it was only to Russia that the Black Sea was to be closed that he withdrew his ambassadors from Paris and London. He dispatched Count Orloff with a final offer of conciliation, but the excitement in Europe had, as we have seen, infected the negotiators themselves, and terms which would have been acceptable a few months earlier were now dismissed almost without consideration.

We have seen that these negotiations were complicated, and their success baulked by a series of movements of a threatening character. The Tsar’s initial action in crossing the Pruth; the Sultan’s premature declaration of war; the advance of the allied fleet first to the Archipelago, then to the Dardanelles, then up to Constantinople, and finally into the Black Sea—all

¹ Stratford reported on November 5th that he had prevented the Turks from sending ships into the Black Sea: a fleet did, as a matter of fact, enter the Black Sea and part of it returned, leaving the rest to be destroyed by the Russians.

these actions militated against the success of the negotiations; while the request made to the Tsar to keep his fleet in the harbour of Sevastopol and the final hasty dispatch of the ultimatum were both actions which made war certain when peace was, as it seemed, in sight.

In England the Cabinet which was responsible for some of these contradictory actions was, for the most part, anxious for peace. Apparently it was not a free agent. It was compelled, we are told, by public opinion.

The analysis of this mysterious force involves the answer to three questions. First, we must ask what views contested the field in England concerning foreign affairs in general and the Eastern Question especially? What public opinions existed concerning British foreign policy? And where there were no conscious 'opinions', what associations had grown up round such names as Tsar, Napoleon, Palmerston, Aberdeen, Stratford, Dardanelles, Austria, France, Turkey, and Russia? In this analysis we must carefully distinguish between those who were experts, at any rate in the sense that they had some first-hand knowledge of the diplomatic situation, and those, the great bulk of the nation, who relied entirely on indirect evidence.

Secondly, we must discover in what form new information on our foreign relationships came to this inexperienced public. What, in fact, were the sources of public information? This involves an examination of the newspapers of the period, the pamphlets and other literature devoted to foreign affairs, and the speeches in Parliament and at public meetings dealing with the Eastern Question. And here, heedless of journalistic etiquette, we must become eavesdroppers and hear what little we may of the conversations which discreetly pass in the editor's room, and even probe that private correspondence which has always existed between those who govern and those who persuade the governed of their fitness to do so. We must even risk an opinion as to the motives for this persuasion and ask, since the art of journalism is one of selection, why the editor emphasized this

story and neglected that source of information. In other words, how did the facts become ‘news’?

Thirdly, we must inquire what effect the news, as presented, had upon its readers; what new pictures of the situation in the East were formed, and how these new popular images reacted upon the statesmen, who, though often supplied with better information, were in the last resort dependent on popular favour.

Though taking different views of the Eastern Question, the Cabinet members at first reached agreement without great difficulty, but, before the end of the period, the reaction of newspaper opinion led to the adoption of a policy disapproved of by the Premier and a number of his colleagues. Meanwhile, the newspapers and periodicals, though at first taking widely different views, tended to present a similar picture of the situation. To this image *The Times* almost alone among important papers refused to conform.

The second period, during which the Vienna Note seemed to offer a hopeful solution, found the Cabinet at first almost united. But with the publication of Nesselrode’s interpretation on the one hand, and on the other the discovery that Turkey was certainly more anxious for war than Russia, the division in the Cabinet became irreconcilable. Outside, the papers, after a few days of confidence in the prospect of peace, became insistent in the demand for definite aid to Turkey. Russia’s bad faith was now accepted as certain, and even *The Times* began to falter.

The third period, beginning in October, was marked by crowded meetings on behalf of Turkey which had just declared war on Russia, in spite of the warnings of our Government. In the Cabinet the dissension had become intolerable, and Lord Palmerston resigned. The news of this resignation followed hard upon the announcement that Russia had caught a small Turkish fleet and destroyed it almost within earshot of our protecting fleet. The required setting was now complete: a cruel Tsar, a trustful Turkey, betrayed by a faithless Government

and a Court in secret alliance with Russia, and the one 'English Minister' driven out by their machinations.

During the final period the newspapers had reached something approaching unanimity. Almost all the critical voices were hushed, and an increasing pressure was brought to bear on a Government which finally declared war, without the co-operation of one of our most important allies, at a time when a few days more of patience might have procured peace.

The picture of the Eastern struggle, misty and diverse at first, has settled in hard and vivid outline. The subtleties and uncertainties which first made decision difficult have disappeared. In the minds of thousands is the same set of images, and the same reaction. Russia, as becomes a villain, is diabolic, clever, yet somehow easy to defeat by courage and a fleet; Turkey, the distressed maiden, bravely bids the ravisher defiance; the suggestion that Britain shall complete the romance in the rôle of the gallant knight-errant is overwhelming. The voices of honour and self-interest are indistinguishable; there is the cruelty of Sinope to avenge, our trade and prestige in the East to protect. The opposition of Bright and his friends has become treachery, and even though the Tsar is perhaps willing to leave his bullying and flee before our wrath, Honour urges forward and Glory lies before.

Lord Palmerston and Public Opinion

(1846 – 1852)

THE PEACE SOCIETY AND THE POLICY OF NON-INTERVENTION

DURING the thirty years' peace which followed the Napoleonic Wars the vast majority of Englishmen were not interested in foreign affairs. As Disraeli remarked in a speech twenty years later, 'The very phrase "foreign affairs" makes an Englishman convinced that I am about to treat of subjects with which he has no concern.' In 1853 this was even more true. There was certainly plenty to do at home. What Cobden and Bright called the 'condition of England question' was not settled by the repeal of the Corn Laws and the defeat of Chartism, and the immediate problem was to adjust a Constitution, so often pronounced perfect in every detail, to the necessities of a new age. The middle classes of England, who now possessed a large share of the national wealth, demanded a corresponding share of political influence and, during the fourteen years which followed the Reform Bill, demonstrated the crucial fact of the Victorian Age—that England's policy was to be dictated by her shopkeepers. But to Bright and Cobden, who led the way to victory, the repeal of the Corn Laws seemed far more than a triumph of the industrial classes over the landowners and aristocracy. They believed that the cheering crowds who thronged their platform spoke with the authentic voice of the people of England. In that voice Cobden found a certain 'intuitive sagacity which had given rise to the old adage that the voice of the people was the voice of God'. A glorious vista was opened: the Corn Laws were but the first work of darkness destined to be swept away by the power of the new democracy.

Wars with their accompanying evils of increased armaments and high taxation would surely cease with the foundation of an enlightened international comity. Universal peace was the natural corollary to Free Trade. 'I believe,' Cobden told an audience at Manchester in 1846, 'that the desire and motive for large and mighty empires, for gigantic armies and great navies, will die away when man becomes one family and freely exchanges the fruits of his labour with his brother man.'

In 1847, however, the Duke of Wellington, whose past greatness and dignified old age everywhere secured for his lightest word a reverence that was almost religious, came to the conclusion that Louis Philippe was planning an invasion of England. He expressed this opinion in a private letter to a fellow officer and the letter found its way into the public Press.¹ To the dismay of every newspaper reader and the astonishment of every naval authority, the country was informed that there was 'not a spot on the coast on which infantry might not be thrown on shore at any time of tide, with any wind, and in any weather, and from which such a body of infantry, so thrown on shore, would not find within a distance of five miles a road into the interior of the country, through the cliffs, practicable for the march of a body of troops'. The effect of this letter was great and a demand for an increase in our national defences immediately followed. The Whig Ministry, which had come into power after the fall of Sir Robert Peel, determined to bring in a Militia Bill. The project was supported by Lord Palmerston, who had entered upon his third term at the Foreign Office and had once more begun that policy of *taquinerie* which so exasperated the Foreign Ministers and Courts of Europe. Now, if ever, was the time for Cobden and his friends to put the 'intuitive sagacity' of their countrymen to the test.

Cobden did his best to transform the Anti-Corn Law League into an equally effective Peace Society. But the task was no easy one. The League had withstood and defeated the class of

¹ Lord John Russell said on behalf of the Duke that 'nothing could have given greater pain [to the Duke] than the publication of sentiments which he had expressed confidentially to a brother officer'. Hansard, XCVI, p. 909.

landlords, but the new enemy was human nature itself. At the time of the Duke's letter, Cobden wrote to John Bright: 'I have always had an instinctive monomania against this system of foreign interference, protocolling, diplomatizing, etc., and I should be glad if you and our other free-trade friends, who have beaten the daily broadsheets into common sense upon another question, would oppose yourselves to the Palmerstonian system and try to prevent the Foreign Office from undoing the good work which the Board of Trade has done to the people. But you must not disguise from yourselves that the evil has its roots in the pugnacious, energetic, self-sufficient, foreigner-despising, and pitying character of the noble insular creature John Bull.'

The newly formed Peace Society did its best to reform John Bull. During the succeeding years it held conferences in Manchester and Glasgow, in Brussels, Frankfurt, and Paris. Public meetings protested against the enterprising massacres of 'Rajah Brooke' in Borneo and passed resolutions against the Kaffir War in South Africa. Such protests met with little sympathy in the Press; and some sporting papers like *Bell's Life* seemed to regard the shooting of Dyaks as a natural recreation of the Englishman when pheasants were out of season. Unfortunately, such papers as the *Illustrated London News*, with a large middle-class circulation, were equally unfavourable. 'How many public men who have ambitions to gratify,' Cobden wondered, 'will range themselves alongside of us so long as the Press is thus opposed to them? To change the Press we must change public opinion. And, mind, when I speak of the Press I speak of those weekly papers which are really supported by the people.'¹

Yet occasionally there was encouragement. In June 1849, Cobden had proposed in the House of Commons the adoption of the principle of arbitration. Though defeated, he procured seventy-nine votes in his favour, and *Punch*, edited by his friend,

¹ The Punjab Campaign, for instance, formed the main item of interest for several months (beginning January 27th, 1849) in the *Illustrated London News*. Its circulation at this time was estimated at 60,000. For the activities of the Peace Society at this time, vide Lewis Appleton, *Memoirs of Henry Richard* (1889), pp. 48-53.

Douglas Jerrold, wrote that 'the olive twig placed by Cobden in Westminster will flourish despite the blighting wit of mess rooms, and will rise and spread into a tree that shall offer shade and security for all nations'.¹

Cobden's motion in favour of international arbitration represents the highest point achieved by the Peace Society for many years. A few months later an incident occurred which showed that a new spirit had appeared in English public life. A young generation of Englishmen had watched the continental revolutions of 1848 with a feeling of gratitude that England was not as other nations. European despotisms were advised to adopt a Constitution like that of Britain; they, too, would find only Chartists where now they found Carbonari. But in 1849 a change came. The old regime again triumphed; the revolutionaries of 1848 were the martyrs of 1849. Englishmen read with disgust of the torture of prisoners in Lombardy and Naples, of the atrocities of Russian troops in Hungary, and of the flogging of high-born ladies by General Haynau. It is probable that nothing would have come from this new liberal sympathy had the Tsar and the Austrian Emperor been content with crushing the revolution in Hungary. But they went further and demanded that Turkey should surrender those Hungarian patriots who had taken refuge in the Ottoman Empire. Encouraged by Stratford-Canning, the British Ambassador at the Porte, Turkey refused. A wave of sentiment swept over England. *Punch*, hitherto so strongly non-interventionist, held up the Tsar to public execration and began to ridicule the efforts of the Peace Society. Backed by this national feeling, Lord Palmerston dispatched a British fleet to the Dardanelles and, whether in deference to this threat or not, the Emperors withdrew their demand.²

¹ *Punch*, June 1849. Earlier in the same year *Punch* rebuked the Duke of Wellington for wanting to educate the army since, if soldiers were educated, there would be no army! Douglas Jerrold was strongly pacific in sentiment until 1849. His correspondence with Joseph Sturge on the subject is given by Henry Richard in his *Memoirs of Joseph Sturge* (1864).

² Cobden and many others declared that the Tsar had given way before the dispatch of the fleet, but it was commonly believed that Palmerston's action had



JOHN BULL SHOWING THE FOREIGN POWERS HOW TO MAKE A
CONSTITUTIONAL PLUM-PUDDING.

Punch: December 1848

The incident left an enduring impression on the minds of thousands of Englishmen. For the first time, that middle-class public, for whose favours Cobden and Palmerston were rival suitors, became really enthusiastic on behalf of a foreign national movement. The most illustrious of the refugees, Louis Kossuth, made his way to England, and by his eloquent accounts of the horrors of 1849 prevented memory of the incident growing dim. The Tsar and the Austrian Emperor were now known to be 'merciless tyrants and despots' and, by a curious accident, Turkey had taken her place among the champions of European Liberalism. Most important of all, the incident added immensely to the popularity of Lord Palmerston.

LORD PALMERSTON AND THE INCIDENT OF DON PACIFICO

Lord Palmerston was already over sixty years of age and had been employed in the government of Britain for forty years. Before the incident of the refugees he had been a popular statesman, second only to Lord John Russell among the Whig leaders. But the new spirit which the reaction in Europe had roused in England gave him a greater opportunity. He knew that the policy of 'non-intervention' was no longer attractive. Non-intervention in the past had meant the refusal to aid Metternich in governing Europe for the advantage of the House of Hapsburg. After 1849 non-intervention seemed national selfishness and Palmerston appealed directly to a young generation to whom the arguments of political economists, the commercial warnings of the Manchester School, and the cautious diplomacy of the old type of statesmen seemed alike mean and cowardly. He knew that a country which had

frightened the Tsar. A vigorous policy on the part of Palmerston in the preceding year might very possibly have prevented Russia from crossing the frontier to put down the Hungarian Republic. But he refused to recognize the Revolutionary Government and allowed it to be crushed without protest. European revolutionaries, therefore, liked him no better than did their enemies. Vide *The Story of Lord Palmerston*, by Karl Marx, and the speeches of Louis Kossuth. A suggestive explanation of this apparent inconsistency and an account of the propaganda in English newspapers on behalf of the refugees in the autumn of 1849 is given by Sproxtton, *Palmerston and the Hungarian Revolution*.

known nothing of warfare for more than thirty years was not likely to be afraid of a bold foreign policy. The actualities of the battlefield had been forgotten or had gathered round themselves that pleasant atmosphere of romantic adventure which the flags of victory, the reminiscences of veterans, and the mutual exchange of ministerial congratulations so easily substituted in time of peace. In the duel which Cobden set himself to fight with Palmerston for the capture of public opinion reasoned knowledge was on his side; but ignorance is a great asset in political controversy and the romanticism which springs from it is more than a match for self-interest, however enlightened. There was an instinctive response to Palmerston's appeal; the craving for that excitement which nineteenth-century industrialism did so little to satisfy, the pride of national greatness, the contempt for the foreigner, and the natural love of the battle which is just out of sight; all these were on Lord Palmerston's side.

He knew that blue books and diplomatic documents were tedious and, though himself necessarily concerned with them, he never made Cobden's mistake of inflicting them on the public. He understood by instinct what Stockmar learnt by observation, that the English were not really interested in foreign politics but in individuals. While he was in charge European diplomacy took on the familiar appearance of a sporting arena. All was personal and vivid. Intricate questions of policy, which Prince Albert or Lord Aberdeen found subjects for anxious discussion and careful memoranda, were apparently regarded by Palmerston as challenges to a boxing match; and with delight the public saw him rush into the fray like the warm-hearted schoolboy of fiction who could not allow a smaller boy to be bullied in his presence.¹ 'I have been so busy,' he would say, 'fighting my battle with France that I have been obliged to put off for a time taking up my skirmish with Russia.' And when actual interference was unwise or unnecessary he kept up the

¹ So *Punch* liked to represent him. Cp. vol. XV. 'Mr. Punch's Prizes for the Session', 'Master Pam for his intrepidity in jumping into hot water on all occasions'.

sporting metaphor and represented himself as the cool bystander who would keep the ring and ensure fair play. He was, he said, the 'judicious bottle-holder' and he at once appeared in *Punch* with a straw in his mouth.

Thus his intention was always to represent himself as the type of what Englishmen liked an English statesman to be. Even advanced working-men, to whom Palmerston was apt to talk like a Manchester Liberal, found a soft place for so good a sportsman, and even David Urquhart's obsessional propaganda could never convince more than a handful that 'Pam' was a traitor.¹ He cared nothing for the opinion of foreign Courts, little for that of his fellow statesmen or even his own Foreign Office officials: statesmen might come and go but 'John Bull', he believed, would go on for ever.

'As long as England is England,' he declared, 'as long as the English people are animated by the feelings and spirit and opinions which they possess, you may knock down twenty Foreign Ministers one after another, but depend upon it no one will keep his place who does not act upon the same principles.' What these principles were he explained in his speech on the occasion of Cobden's arbitration proposal.

He was convinced, and his conviction was shared by a large number of his countrymen, that the interest of England consistently coincided with the eternal principles of morality. 'I hold that the real policy of England is to be the champion of justice and right: pursuing that course with moderation and prudence, not becoming the Quixote of the world, but giving the weight of her moral sanction and support wherever she thinks justice, and whenever she thinks that wrong has been done . . . we have no eternal allies and no perpetual enemies.

¹ For David Urquhart, vide Gertrude Robinson's *Life* and Asa Briggs, *Victorian People* (Odhams Press, 1954) and his pamphlet *David Urquhart and the Foreign Affairs Committees*. He organized working-men's classes for the study of foreign affairs at which he taught the universal danger from Russia and the subservience of our statesmen to the Tsar. He claimed that he had destroyed the Chartist Movement by this diversion and added, 'I cannot conceive of circumstances under which I should be wrong.' For Palmerston's dealings with working-men, vide G. Jacob Holyoake, *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life, 1830-90* (1892), vol. II, p. 77, and his descriptions of Urquhart's 'Society for cutting off Palmerston's head'.

Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow; and if I might be allowed to express in one sentence the principle which ought to guide an English Minister, I would adopt an expression of Canning and say that with every British Minister the interests of England ought to be Shibboleth of his policy.'

In Lord Palmerston's hands, therefore, the voter felt confident that his pride, his interest, and his conscience were all in safe keeping. He was in a peculiar manner a representative man—'Minister for England'. For the most part he assumed this character by instinct. But there was something further that has not been understood by his biographers. He was quite conscious that he relied on forces in the national system which other Foreign Ministers were wont to neglect. He belonged to a political party, but it was his object to transcend party issues. His appeal was, in the strict sense of the word, a democratic one. He never missed an opportunity of appearing to advantage in a daily paper. Every political group employed some newspaper to represent its point of view, and even, on occasion, to make official statements on its behalf, but Palmerston was probably the first British statesman who deliberately ingratiated himself with papers of all shades of opinion. After his death, the editor of a prominent paper wrote: 'There was never a man who was so great a favourite personally, not with the reporters only, but with all the gentlemen filling the higher positions on the Press, as the late Lord Palmerston. The reporters of all the papers, without reference to the point as to whether the paper they represented were favourable or opposed to his Government, vied with each other in their anxiety to pay attention to whatever he said.' Neither was their favour wholly unsolicited. 'It often happened during the prolonged Premiership or Foreign Secretaryship of Lord Palmerston, that on representing to him both in Hants or at Tiverton that if the time fixed for his speech could not be altered, the reporters from London would not be able to reach their respective offices with their report until too late, he would immediately apply to alter the programmes so

that the reporters should not be disappointed.' And, on occasions when an alteration of the programme would not serve, he was willing to make private orations in his room at the hotel, which the reporters could convey punctually for the morning's paper.

It was this personal appeal to the public which differentiated Lord Palmerston from other statesmen of his period and which so often infuriated them. He knew that if he was sufficiently popular he could do what he liked. 'Palmerston,' wrote Bulwer Lytton, 'is Mamma England's spoilt child, and the more mischief he does the more she admires him. What a spirit he has! cries Mamma, and smash goes the crockery!' And he was just as cheerful, jaunty some called it, whether it was the national or the party crockery that went smash. His actions as Foreign Minister were his own, not those of his Government, and when he spoke in Parliament he was not so much concerned with the faces he saw round him as with the greater public which would read his speech in the newspaper the next morning. Thus he cared little to answer particular objections raised against him: he was interested in enunciating some general principle which would make his speech memorable all over the country, or in taunting his opponents in a manner which would amuse even where it did not convince. Arguments of policy he met with arguments *ad hominem*. When he could not answer Cobden's unexpected facts he felt no embarrassment as Peel did under similar circumstances: he repelled the facts with gibes. He always assumed, for instance, that a Manchester non-interventionist was a mercenary pacifist who was ready to sell his country for money. On one occasion John Bright described his method: In answer to a remark to this effect, 'I wonder if the country were invaded what the Peace Society would do?' John Bright replied that Lord Palmerston used to say they (the Peace Society) would go with their hands full of money and say to the invader, 'How much will you take to go away?' 'But,' Mr. Bright concluded, 'I never doubted that when there was a nation that accepted the laws of Christ, and sought to act them

out, and sought to live consistently among these other nations, and carried out the influence of the Christian spirit in its relation with others, I never doubted in my life that the Eternal would take care of that nation.'

Cobden, who was not granted his friend's intimate knowledge of the ways of Providence, found it less easy to reply. He was conscious of the sufferings of oppressed nations and was anxious, in extreme cases, to organize public opinion in their favour. When he admitted this, Palmerston asked a further question: Had public opinion any value unless supported by guns and soldiers in the background? Cobden had been willing to speak at a meeting to welcome Kossuth: what would he have done if Russia had pressed her claims a little further in 1849? Would Cobden have withdrawn and left him to the mercies of Radetzky or Haynau, or would he, too, have forgotten the policy of non-intervention and believed with Palmerston that the time had come for gunboats?

Palmerston's speeches were not all banter or all argument. He mingled elements acceptable to every section of his audience, and so great was his skill that all but the few who carefully studied his argument found themselves in agreement. He may not have been wholly aware of the technique he was employing, but he was a supreme master of the art of using elusive general terms, calculated to rouse enthusiasm among his supporters without appearing dangerous to any but his most violent opponents. These latter served his purpose as objects of ridicule.

Lord Palmerston, then, relied on the fact that 'Mamma England' was fond of him. Between 1846 and 1850 he put her affection to the test by breaking an almost excessive amount of crockery. During these four years he quarrelled with the French, Austrian, Russian, and Spanish Governments, and had come near, as it seemed, to fighting all of them in turn; sometimes he was meddling in Switzerland, sometimes wrangling with Louis Philippe and Guizot concerning the Spanish marriages; now he was encouraging Italian patriots and now

suggesting a Constitution to the Pope; again he was aiding the revolution in Portugal or coercing the Tsar in aid of Hungarian refugees in Turkey. But at last, in the summer of 1850, many thought that he had passed even the latitude allowed to the favourite child. England was isolated in Europe. It seemed that a European war was just about to break out because Lord Palmerston supported the claims of a certain Don Pacifico, who had failed to receive compensation from the Government of Greece for property which had been injured by an Athenian mob.

The prosecution of these claims had led to imminent danger of war with France and at that moment British gunboats were bombarding a Greek port and challenging Russia to join with France against us. Many thought this an expensive way of collecting the doubtful debts of a disreputable Portuguese Jew, even though he happened to be a British subject. Palmerston's enemies saw their chance. France and Russia had reached the end of their patience; Lord John had nearly reached the end of his. The Russian Minister was threatening to follow M. Drouyn de Lluys who had already quitted London. It seemed likely that Lord John, finding England's good faith was impugned as well as war threatened, would prefer to dismiss Palmerston without himself resigning. 'At last,' wrote Greville, 'there seems a tolerable chance of Palmerston coming to grief.' The Cabinet, however, resolved 'to do nothing' and to hope that the 'rickety concern will scramble on as heretofore'.

The Opposition, therefore, brought a concerted attack upon the Government's foreign policy. Lord Derby moved a vote of censure in the House of Lords and carried it by a substantial majority. In the House of Commons debate which followed, every political group pronounced with unusual clearness its opinion not merely on the Don Pacifico incident but on the whole question of a British statesman's duty in foreign affairs.

It was not till the second night that Palmerston spoke. He knew that there were four main sections of opinion in the House. Since Lord John Russell had resolved to support him he was

sure of the Whig vote, but there were many who, though giving his policy general support, thought that on this occasion he had exposed the country to unnecessary risks. He hoped, if possible, to transform these party voters into firm adherents of his own.

In the second place there was the Manchester School whose underlying disunity was not yet apparent. For the time it was strongly pacific and composed of business men who believed in Free Trade and peace as a path to prosperity, and of more extreme pacifists, many of whom were Quakers. But for the moment they were all strong 'non-interventionists' and opposed to Palmerston's whole conduct of foreign policy.

Thirdly, he had to meet the old school of Conservative non-interventionists. Sir Robert Peel in his last speech voiced its views and Mr. Gladstone supported him with telling eloquence.¹ Peel showed that his position was that which Canning had adopted at the Congress of Vienna. It was not our business to interfere by aiding the revolutionaries of Europe any more than it was right for us to aid Metternich in upholding despotisms like that of King Bomba. His principle was easily definable, 'namely, non-interference with the domestic affairs of other countries without some clear and undeniable necessity arising from the circumstances, affecting the interests of your own country'.²

Lastly, the Derbyites attacked Lord Palmerston not so much because he interfered abroad as because they considered that he habitually did so on the wrong side. In this case they led the attack against him because they saw in the Greek dispute an opportunity for weakening and perhaps destroying the Whig Government, on the grounds that our claims in the East were

¹ This speech is particularly notable because Mr. Gladstone did not frequently make jokes. After describing the extravagance of Don Pacifico's claims he continued, 'So, sir, having his house crammed full of fine furniture, fine clothes, and fine jewels, Mr. Pacifico was in all other respects a pauper.' This furniture all so 'massive and solid was utterly destroyed', and yet there was no fire. 'Why, sir, they could not without fire thus have destroyed such articles unless, indeed, they had eaten them.'

² Sir Robert Peel was thrown from his horse on the day of his speech and died two days later. His death removed the most powerful of Lord Palmerston's political opponents.

entirely indefensible and had left England without a friend in Europe.

Confronted with this combined attack, Lord Palmerston set himself not only to answer his opponents, but also, if possible, to win them. The Manchester School he left alone. Flippancy, his usual method of dealing with Cobden and his friends, was out of place on this occasion and, in any case, he had no hope of winning their votes.

His object was to convince the Tories and the Whigs that in the general question of the conduct of foreign affairs they were in substantial agreement. He hoped to show that his policy was not Whig or Tory, but 'English'.

He therefore began by accusing his opponents of making a party issue of a matter which, he said, demanded more than a mere expression of opinion in the House of Lords. He stated that the resolution which had been accepted there laid down that 'British subjects in foreign lands are entitled to nothing but the protection of the laws and the tribunals of the land in which they happen to reside'.¹ He thus took the debate as far as possible from the narrow question of our policy in Greece by interpreting the resolution in a way which only Mr. Gladstone and a few of his most critical opponents realized that it could not bear. He proceeded to show that it outlined a position which no Foreign Minister would find tolerable. That recourse should first be had to the Courts of the foreign country he willingly admitted, but what was to be done in countries where legality was a fraud and justice a synonym for cruelty and extortion? Drawing pictures of Englishmen robbed, tortured, bastinadoed, executed on false witness, he asked his non-interventionist critics, his dubious friends, and Tory libellers whether any Foreign

¹ The actual words of the resolution in the Lords were: 'To resolve that while the House fully recognizes the right and duty of the Government to secure to Her Majesty's subjects residing in Foreign States the full protection of the Laws of these States, it regrets to find, by the Correspondence recently laid upon the Table by Her Majesty's Command, that various claims against the Greek Government, doubtful in point of justice, or exaggerated in amount, have been enforced by coercive measures directed against the Commerce and People of Greece, and calculated to endanger the continuance of our Friendly relations with other Powers.'

Minister could avoid interference in such cases. Cheers assured him that he could not. In the atmosphere thus created it was easy to refute actual charges without referring in too much detail to the difficult points connected with Don Pacifico's claim of £50 for a '*lit conjugal*' and £170 for a drawing-room sofa.

Having thus taken the war into the enemies' camp, he proceeded to rout them by a veiled but quite easily discernible accusation that the reason for this attack on the Government was a foreign intrigue. He was being attacked because Russian and French Ministers hated him. It was these supporters of Court parties and reactionary Ministers who were the real revolutionaries; 'the blind-minded men who dam up the current of human improvement until the irresistible pressure of accumulated discontent breaks down those very institutions which a timely application of renovating means would have rendered strong and lasting'.

Palmerston so far had answered the charges against him, and discredited his opponents by the simple process of assuming that they held a doctrine and adopted a method of attack which had been far from their thoughts. It was now time to justify himself before that larger tribunal whose existence he never forgot. Don Pacifico, he knew, mattered little to anyone, and would soon be forgotten. But the principles by which he defended his conduct of foreign affairs needed only embodiment in a striking phrase to appeal to every hearer and newspaper reader. There is, as Gladstone pointed out next day, no real analogy between the British subject, travelling in countries which possess their own laws and civilization, and the Roman citizen of the Empire, dwelling among conquered and semi-barbaric peoples whose only law and justice came from their conquerors. But there were few Englishmen who did not respond to Palmerston's appeal, when, leaving the politics of party and the immediate matter under discussion, he cried that a British subject should be able to say '*Civis Romanus sum*' and, in whatever land he might be, feel 'Confident that the watchful

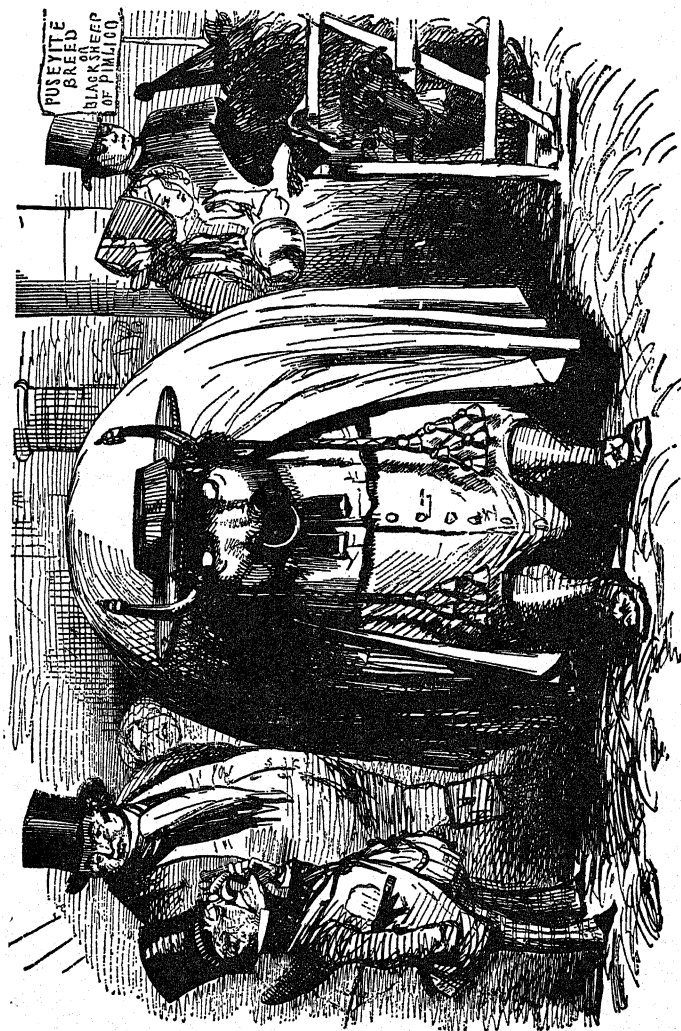
eye and the strong arm of England will protect him against injustice and wrong'.

His speech, with its wonderful peroration, drew applause from his bitterest opponents. Greville, to whom Palmerston represented everything undesirable, did not hear the speech, but read it in the calm of his study. He noted in his diary that Palmerston 'came out with prodigious force and success. . . . It was impossible to deny its great ability: parts of it are strikingly eloquent and inimitably adroit. The ability of it is the more remarkable because on an attentive and calm perusal of it, the insufficiency of it as an answer and defence against the various charges which have been brought against him is manifest.'

This, no doubt, was true, but Greville missed the real significance of the debate when he added that Palmerston had done no more than 'adorn his speech with a profusion of magnificent and successful claptraps'. He had done far more: he had fixed in the minds of Englishmen a permanent picture of true English behaviour. The phrase '*Civis Romanus sum*' might be forgotten, but the idea to which he gave form has never since left English politics. Since 1850, every British Foreign Minister has been compelled to conform, in some degree, to this pattern.

The immediate considerations were equally significant. It was Lord Palmerston who had gained in popularity, not the Whig Government. 'These discussions and attacks,' wrote Greville, 'which were to have shaken him in his seat, have only made him more powerful than he was before, but whether they have strengthened the Government is another question.' Another question! Apparently Palmerston thought it an irrelevant one. He seemed less and less to concern himself with his colleagues and during the next eighteen months at the Foreign Office he behaved as if he alone were responsible for British honour. Unknown to the public he was now engaged in a furious struggle with Prince Albert and the Queen, and Lord John's position between a recalcitrant Foreign Minister and an angry Crown became increasingly difficult.

One further incident occurred in 1850 which, by weakening



GREAT CATTLE SHOW.

THE ROMAN BULL THAT *DIDN'T* GET THE PRIZE.

Punch: 21 December 1850

the position of Lord John and reinforcing the idea that foreign potentates were all enemies of England, indirectly favoured the position of Lord Palmerston. The incident of the 'Papal Aggression' is perhaps as curious as any in the history of nineteenth-century public opinion. A Papal Bull announced that Roman bishoprics were to be established in England. A wave of angry Protestantism swept over England. The traditional hatred and fear of the Papacy had never died. The feeling which had hunted priests in the sixteenth century, made civil war and revolution in the seventeenth century, persecution and Gordon Riots in the eighteenth, revived as implacable as ever. Newspapers, letters, pamphlets, cartoons, public meetings, popular songs, all continued to pour forth anger and execration on the heads of the Pope, Dr. Wiseman, and his colleagues.¹ A backwash of the torrent struck the Puseyites and, though the agitation spent itself after the introduction of an Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, those who dared to vote against its inoperative provisions were always liable to the charge of favouring Papists. Lord John Russell shared the popular excitement, and in an open letter to the Bishop of Durham identified himself with the most extreme of the Protestants. Though he gained a temporary increase of popularity in the country, he roused a bitter

¹ *Punch*, vol. XIX. All the political cartoons and many articles for almost six months deal with the 'Papal Aggression'. Cp. also a popular ballad preserved in the British Museum:

'CARDINAL WISEMAN

'Good people, pray listen, I'll tell you a joke
That was tried on us English by the foolish Pope,
Who sent us a *Bull*, Oh! What an old bloak!
To try such a thing in old England.
In Old England 'twill never go down!

'Oh! Cardinal Wiseman you must be a flat,
To try in Old England to wear the red hat,
Who would think a *Wiseman* so foolish as that!
To wear such a thing in Old England.
In Old England 'twill never go down.

'Little Lord John he penn'd a sharp note
To the Bishop of Durham concerning the Pope,
And another fat churchman who was turning his coat,
But if he does he'll be turned from Old England.
In England 'twill never go down!'

antagonism among the Irish members, and alienated many moderate men who might have been willing to accept his leadership in the future.¹ But the picture that Lord Palmerston had drawn was lined in more deeply. The Pope had taken his place side by side with the other tyrants and enemies of liberty—Bomba, the Austrian Emperor, and the Tsar. ‘The Pope,’ declared one newspaper editor, ‘means that Wiseman shall rule the foreign policy of England instead of Lord Palmerston.’

THE DISMISSAL OF LORD PALMERSTON AND THE FRENCH PANIC

On May 1st, 1851, the Great Exhibition was opened to the public. The erection of this immense pile of glass, containing examples of industrial enterprise from all parts of the world, seemed to many who visited it more than a mere work of art: it stood as a symbol of the victory of international brotherhood and mutual dependence. A strenuous attack had been made on the project by ‘a set of fashionables and protectionists’, but the Prince Consort and his Committee had routed them. Even the persistent outcry against the desecration of Hyde Park had been quieted. Some observers felt that the very arrangements and organization were symbolic of those principles which were expressed so eloquently in the speeches: coercion was to disappear and commercial pacifism win its tardy battle. ‘It was a wonderful spectacle to see the countless multitudes streaming along in every direction and congregated upon each bank of the Serpentine; hardly any policemen to be seen and yet all so orderly and good-humoured.’ Yet the policeman still remained

¹ Lord John Russell wrote in his *Recollections* (1813-73): ‘My purpose was fully answered. Those who wished to give the Pope the right of appointing bishops in England opposed the Bill. When my object had been gained I had no objection to the repeal of the Act.’ It is curious to notice that one of those who suffered most for his opposition to the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill was Mr. Gladstone, afterwards so redoubtable an opponent of Papal pretensions. The Hon. Emily Eden wrote to Clarendon: ‘As for Mr. Gladstone, I rather expected that if he came into power we might any of us be burnt at Smithfield on his warrant and under the eyes of Cardinals Philpotts and Wilberforce.’—Sir Herbert Maxwell, *Life of the Fourth Earl of Clarendon* (2 vols., 1913).

a necessary feature of English society, and it is doubtful if the moral lesson of the Exhibition had penetrated as deeply as its more enthusiastic supporters believed.¹ At any rate the British public was not disposed to a mere promiscuous benevolence. In the autumn of the same year, Louis Kossuth reached England and was everywhere received by the populace with almost regal honours. At Douglas Jerrold's suggestion a collection of pence was made to be spent on a presentation copy of Shakespeare in commemoration of the fact that, while in an Austrian prison, Kossuth had first studied the English language in the works of the English national poet. Nearly ten thousand pennies were collected, and at a meeting at the London Tavern, presided over by Dudley Stuart, M.P., a gorgeously bound edition of Knight's *Shakespeare*, ornamented with the arms of the Kossuth family, decorated in crimson silk and gold, and enclosed in a wrought case, was presented to the Hungarian hero amidst intense enthusiasm. Lord Palmerston, who had only with difficulty been prevented from receiving Kossuth in his own house, made no effort to hide his sympathy, and when the inhabitants of Finsbury and Islington presented him with an address describing the Emperors of Austria and Russia as 'odious and detestable assassins', he allowed it to be seen that his hearty endorsement of their phraseology was prevented only by his position as Foreign Secretary.

Three months later an event occurred which seemed for the moment to be the end of Lord Palmerston. The struggle between the Crown and the Foreign Minister, which had been raging in secret from the early days of the Government, now

¹ A contemporary broadside, now preserved in the British Museum, suggests that a national rather than an international interpretation could be placed upon the Exhibition:

"THE CRYSTAL PALACE.

'From every quarter of the Globe
They come across the sea,
Right to the Crystal Palace
The wonder for to see.
Raised by the handiwork of men
Born on British ground,
A challenge to the universe
Its equal to be found.'

came to a head. At the beginning of December Louis Napoleon carried out a successful *coup d'état* in Paris. In spite of definite instructions not to depart from a policy of neutrality Lord Palmerston signified to the French Ambassador his complete approval of Napoleon's action, and Lord John, exasperated beyond measure, at length satisfied the Court by dismissing him. The opportunity seemed an excellent one, 'for this time he had been at once both indiscreet and undemocratic'.

Indeed, his action is not easy to explain. We know now that he did everything in his power to cultivate good relations with Louis Napoleon, and that his connection with Walewski was one of unusual intimacy and his private sources of information from France extensive. Possibly he was exceptionally long-sighted and realized that we should eventually need the friendship of Napoleon against Russia. More probably he approved of Louis Napoleon simply because his triumph meant the discomfiture of the Guizot Party and made hopeless the cause of Orléans as well as that of the socialists. But whatever his reasons, he seemed to be permanently prevented from plaguing further the Cabinets of Europe.

In the debate which followed his dismissal, Lord John seemed to triumph overwhelmingly. He read to the astonished House a Memorandum which had been sent to Lord Palmerston by the Queen in the preceding year. It stated with unusual frankness that the Queen would be justified in dismissing a Foreign Minister who 'arbitrarily altered or modified' documents to which the royal sanction had been given and, in effect, reminded Lord Palmerston that the Foreign Secretary was responsible to the Crown. Greville made a note in his diary of the impression produced in the House. 'In all my experience I never recollect such a triumph as John Russell achieved or such a complete discomfiture as Palmerston's. Lord John made a very able speech, and disclosed as much as was necessary and no more. Beyond all doubt his great *coup* was the Queen's Minute of 1850, which was absolutely crushing. Some grave persons think the introduction of her name was going too far,

but it was irresistible. The effect was prodigious. Palmerston was weak and inefficient, and it is pretty certain was unprepared for all that Lord John brought forward.'

Even Palmerston's best friends thought his position almost hopeless, while Disraeli expressed the usual view when he said, 'There *was* a Palmerston.' As a matter of fact, it is unlikely that any incident of his career proved, in the long run, so greatly to his advantage. Crushed for the moment in the House, he resorted to a weapon he had already used in 1850. He declared himself a victim of foreign intrigue. From this time onward he used this plea to strengthen his position. His colleagues, perhaps, were subservient to foreign influence, to Guizot or perhaps to German or Russian Courts: he alone, who had stood foursquare against the enemies of England, had paid the penalty. Macaulay, sitting next to Thiers at breakfast a few weeks later, remarked of Palmerston, 'Après avoir été l'apôtre des idées libérales, il a été le martyr du pouvoir arbitraire.' 'Mon Dieu!' said Thiers, 'et c'est un Anglais qui a dit ça.'

The most curious feature of the situation was that the occasion of Palmerston's dismissal was his approval of the destruction of French liberalism. A few English liberals were puzzled at the defection of their leader. The *Westminster* noted the fact and frankly gave it up: 'We are inclined to think that even in that act of treason towards liberty his Lordship was not unactuated by a liberal, however mistaken and mysterious a motive.'

But, for the most part, Palmerston's supporters in the country refused to believe that he could have approved of the behaviour of Napoleon whom they regarded as the new menace to European freedom. It seemed that Palmerston had reached an eminence which shut out the view of such ironical facts. 'Every event in which Palmerston is concerned ends in his standing higher than he did before,' said one observer. The Tories were divided: some hoped that the Whig Government could not stand without him, while *The Times* supported the Government. *Reynolds's* told its socialist readers that 'though certainly

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no admirers of Lord Palmerston's foreign policy, we cannot but consider his dismissal . . . an unworthy concession to the Court at Vienna' and explained that the real cause of his dismissal was the incident of the Kossuth address. Ministerial explanations, which had seemed so effective in Parliament, dissolved in the heat of national popularity. The occasion of his dismissal was at once forgotten, but the fact that he had been dismissed at the wish of the Court was remembered and was to have unexpected results.¹ In fact, the 'grave persons' of whom Greville

¹ The following popular ditty illustrates the way in which Lord Palmerston's dismissal was regarded outside Parliamentary circles.

'ENGLAND AND NAPOLEON.

I

'Oh! Have you heard the news of late,
The Whigs are in a cranky state,
And they'll find out when it's too late,
They're done for by their snarling;
For small Lord John has been and gone
And turned adrift Lord Palmerston,
Amongst the lot the only don,
Who didn't take care of number one;
Out spoke Home Secretary Gray,
I wish old Palmy was away,
Aye, turn him out they all did say,
For he's the people's darling.

II

'In every foreign Court his name,
Upheld Old England's glorious fame,
And all our enemies were tame
Because he kept them under.
But now in Austria's tyrant Court,
They did chuckle all in glee and sport,
Because they've heard the glad report
Says young Napoleon "that's your sort";
But let them laugh who win the day,
He'll live to make them dearly pay,
That aught against him they did say;
And if he don't I'll wonder.

III

'Where'er doth meet the Parliament,
The Whigs to pot will straight be sent,
That humbug of a Government
Won't live a moment longer.
Then Palmy he'll be at our head,
And keep the tyrants all in dread,
Austria and France will wish him dead
And for a milksop in his stead,

spoke had been more far-sighted than usual: Lord John would have done well to withhold the Queen's Memorandum, to resist the irresistible. The blow would have been less crushing it is true, but one could have been surer of the rebound.

Lord Palmerston thoroughly enjoyed his position. He stood, as he loved to do, between and above parties. Lord John still

Haynau and the Russian Tsar,
Will curse him in their realms afar.
And on their feelings it will jar,
To find old Palmy stronger.

IV

'Young Nap would like his father be,
He hates the manly and the free,
And now an army large has he,
Upon our shores to thunder.
The Frenchmen with their fierce moustachios,
Are now to settle all our hashies,
And Haynau with a whip to lash us
Will feel too glad if he can thrash us.
From Fleet Street along the Strand,
French Cuirasiers will have command,
The Marseillaise will play each band,
The Life Guards will knock under.

V

'Young Nap upon a prancing horse,
Will yell out French until he's hoarse,
Come, shoot them down my gallant force
And make your sabres gory.
You well remember Waterloo,
Where these vile English overthrew
Our soldiers and my uncle to[o].
Amongst our ranks their bullets flew,
You now can pay them what they gave,
Make every Englishman a slave,
No more they're rulers of the wave,
And sunk is England's glory.

VI

'Old Wellington, that queer old chap,
At Apsley House now takes a nap,
I'll catch him straightway in a trap
And take him over the water.
But what is that which now he hears,
A glorious burst of British cheers,
Were done for bayonets and spears,
The British Army swiftly nears
A thundering charge our Life Guards make,
The would-be Emperor they take,
The Frenchmen's ranks like chaff they break
And make them run with slaughter.'

accepted Lady Palmerston's invitations and the Derby party made constant bids for his alliance. He judged it best to wait and remain, as it were, a party by himself. Everyone was complimentary to him now, he said, since no one knew which way the cat would jump.

The occasion to demonstrate his power soon came. Certainly logic had little to do with either his policy or his popularity. Though dismissed on account of his friendliness for Louis Napoleon, he seems to have accepted the popular belief that an invasion of England by the Emperor of France was probable. Early in the session of 1852 Lord John, in deference to the French panic which had now revived with far more than its previous intensity, brought in a Bill for organizing a militia on a local basis. Palmerston at once argued that the measure was insufficient and defeated it by a destructive amendment which insisted on the new militia being regular and national. Lord John was forced to resign, while the House, as Lord Palmerston noted with some complacency, cheered him, 'in a most insulting manner'. 'I have had my tit for tat with John Russell,' he wrote to his brother immediately afterwards. There could be no doubt now that he and not Lord John was the most popular Minister in the country.

On the fall of the Whig Ministry Lord Derby, after great difficulty, succeeded in forming a Government. Having failed to secure the adherence of Palmerston, and being still committed to a Protectionist policy, the new administration never appeared likely to be of long duration. The country was in a state of violent agitation. A Napoleon was once more Emperor in France. Who could doubt that he would attempt to avenge his uncle? In those days of steamships he 'could easily land fifty or sixty thousand troops on the south coast in a single night'.

A French fleet was being built secretly at Cherbourg, another was discovered in the Seine. Was it possible, some asked, that England had really fallen on days of decadence and was afraid of the French? Had England indeed become a nation of shopkeepers? Some believed that the fear of France, whether

justified by facts or not, had a beneficial effect on the national character: it roused once again the heroic spirit in the rising generation, many of whom no doubt itched, after the manner of Meredith's Nevil Beauchamp, to pen a personal challenge to the presumptuous officers of France. The newspapers did their best to encourage this spirit. One of the most influential journalists wrote: 'Nor is it in my opinion useless or unnecessary to keep alive in England a strong feeling on this subject. This nation is a good deal enervated by a long peace, by easy habits of intercourse, by peace societies, and false economy. . . . Happen what may, there is nothing so important as to sustain a tone of moral independence and a clear judgment among the people of England, who will grudge no sacrifices if they are convinced that the principles they cherish are even indirectly threatened from abroad.'

In November the Duke of Wellington died. His funeral was a military pageant which emphasized the majesty of British arms and reminded thousands of onlookers that Napoleon would have conquered had not England been greatly led. Verses poured from the Press expressing the national grief and the fear that England was no longer ready to meet the foe. Tennyson, in a less transitory poem, voiced the sentiment of the moment when he said that 'The last great Englishman is low'.

A people's voice! We are a people yet.
 Tho' all men else their nobler dreams forget,
 Confused by brainless mobs and lawless Powers;
 Thank Him who isled us here, and roughly set
 His Briton in blown seas and storming showers,
 We have a voice, with which to pay the debt
 Of boundless love and reverence and regret
 To those great men who fought, and kept it ours.
 And keep it ours, O God, from brute control;
 O Statesmen, guard us, guard the eye, the soul
 Of Europe, keep our noble England whole,
 And save the one true seed of freedom sown
 Betwixt a people and their ancient throne,

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That sober freedom out of which there springs
Our loyal passion for our temperate kings;
For, saving that, ye help to save mankind
Till public wrong be crumbled into dust,
And drill the raw world for the march of mind,
Till crowds at length be sane and crowns be just.
But wink no more in slothful overtrust.
Remember him who led your hosts;
He bade you guard the sacred coasts.

What statesman was there whom the people could trust to
guard their sacred coast? Was England, bereft of the Duke, an
open prey to the despoiler? Who now would guard her virgin
honour? The task, by an almost universal consent, devolved
upon Lord Palmerston.

3

The Aberdeen Cabinet and the Newspapers (1853)

THE ABERDEEN CABINET

IN December fell the short-lived Derby Ministry. Disraeli's Budget was thrown out by the combined vote of Whigs, Peelites, and Radicals. Since the split in the Tory Party, caused by Sir Robert Peel's conversion to Free Trade in 1846, no political group had found itself strong enough to form a stable Ministry. A coalition was now inevitable. The difficulty was to find an acceptable Premier.

Lord John Russell had lost his prestige as leader of the Whigs. His imprudence during the 'Papal Aggression' incident had alienated the Irish vote and made it impossible for the Peelites to work under him. Moreover, Palmerston, though willing to act in the same Ministry with Lord John, was determined never again to serve in a Cabinet under Lord John as Premier. The idea that Lord John might some day serve under Palmerston's leadership had not yet occurred to anyone.

The Tories were scarcely in a better case. The Derbyites had followers, but few leaders and no policy; the Peelites were a party of leaders without followers. Neither could form a Government alone. There were, therefore, two possibilities. The Peelites were willing to serve under Lord Lansdowne, a Whig whom they respected; and, on the other hand, Lord John declared himself willing to join in a Whig-Peelite coalition with Lord Aberdeen as Premier. Lord Lansdowne, who was seventy-two and in bad health, offered to help Aberdeen but refused to act as Premier. By a process of elimination, therefore, Aberdeen found himself called upon to form a Government.

In forming his Cabinet, Aberdeen found that his difficulties were not for the most part due to differences of principle. They were party and personal. Lord John had agreed to play second fiddle but, when the time arrived, wanted to conduct the orchestra. He made many objections and constantly changed his mind. Eventually, when Lord Aberdeen had promised him the opportunity of a Reform Bill, hinted at the possibility of his early succession to the Premiership, and arranged that he should not be overworked, Lord John agreed to lead the House of Commons and, at the same time, to act as Foreign Secretary for the first two months of the administration.

Lord Aberdeen found further difficulties in making the Government appointments. 'The cake,' said Mr. Disraeli, characteristically, 'is too small.' Many Whigs went away hungry, complaining, perhaps naturally, that though the Whigs provided two hundred and seventy members in the House, and the Peelites provided but thirty-nine, Aberdeen gave six of the Peelites Cabinet rank, and only an equal number of Whigs received Cabinet posts. Eventually, however, all was settled, and the Queen, who had taken a keen interest in every detail, was delighted with the 'success of our excellent Aberdeen and the formation of so brilliant and strong a Cabinet. It is the realization,' she added, 'of the country's and our *most* ardent wishes, and it deserves success, and will, I think, command great support. . . . It has been anxious work, and just on our happy Christmas Eve we were still very uneasy.'

Lord Aberdeen had, as Sir James Graham said, a powerful team that would need good driving. The team consisted of six Whigs, six Peelites, and one Radical. To unite these elements the Premier needed a certain aloofness from party politics. Lord Aberdeen was often willing to compromise on party issues. He had a tendency to favour the middle course and should, therefore, if John Stuart Mill's diagnosis of the English people¹ is the

¹ 'It is the character of the British people, or at least of the higher and middle classes, which pass muster for the British people, that to induce them to approve of any change, it is necessary that they should look upon it as a middle course.'

true one, have been able to get his own way. To Lord John he wrote: 'For my own part I have always repeated the lines of Pope as applicable to myself.

"In moderation placing all my glory,
The Tories call me Whig, the Whigs a Tory."'

He was further qualified for the position by his long intimacy with European politics, his undoubted good faith, and political experience. No one who knew Lord Aberdeen ever accused him of petty ambitions or underhand dealing. He was perhaps the most genuinely disinterested Prime Minister Britain has ever had.

These qualities carried with them certain disadvantages. He had almost fifty years of political experience, but he had not become a politician. He was always something of a recluse. His reserve, chilling at first, was the result of a quite unaffected shyness. He was singularly trustful, highly sensitive, and in those conflicts which commonly bring politicians the joy of warfare he found only pain and a sense of failure. Thus he was sometimes lacking in strength if only because he preferred to give way rather than to press a point at the cost of rancour. But, like many shy men, when stung by opposition and forced to do battle for his principles he was apt to do so with an ill grace. On such occasions he was tactless and sarcastic. He lacked geniality and lightness of touch, and easily displayed a contempt for his opponents if they adopted what seemed to him a vulgar attitude. Thus there was a certain basis of truth beneath the words of his bitterest and least fair critic. Disraeli wrote of him: 'His manner, arrogant and yet timid; his words, insolent and yet obscure; his sneer, icy as Siberia; his sarcasms, drear and barren as the steppes.'

Yet the failure of the Aberdeen Government cannot be attributed to the defective leadership of its Premier. For some months, indeed, the Cabinet was uniformly successful, and but for the Eastern Question this success would probably have continued. In the face of this problem the ordinary conventions of Cabinet procedure proved insufficient to produce the high

degree of corporate activity which became suddenly necessary. It brought out the keenest of political partisanship; it tempted those who knew nothing of the Near East to hide their ignorance in the hope that others knew little more. Successful co-operation could have been attained only by complete frankness and the submission of individual prejudice to expert knowledge. The traditions of Cabinet government would have suggested the former, but never the latter. It therefore happened that none of the important initial questions was ever decided. Aberdeen, Clarendon, Lord John, and Palmerston all acted as their own experts. They never reached any agreement as to the strength of Turkey or the intentions of the Tsar. Nor did they admit openly their fears as to Napoleon's honesty or Lord Stratford's intrigues. They never faced such fundamental questions as, for instance, whether it would be possible to defeat the Tsar without the aid of Austria.¹ They even let their own political necessities prejudge matters of fact, which only a special training and a first-hand knowledge could decide. Perhaps Lord Aberdeen's letter to Sir James Graham on September 6th, 1853, is as good an example of the misuse of the expert adviser as could anywhere be found.

'We [the Cabinet],’ he wrote, ‘decided that we might postpone any consideration respecting the removal of the fleet from Besika Bay, in consequence of our persuasion that it might remain in safety for some time longer: certainly for the whole of this month. It would be desirable, however, that we should have some naval authority to sanction this decision, and I should be obliged to you if you would have the goodness to *procure some statement to this effect.*’

Even the weather was subject to the commands of the Aberdeen Government. It was politically desirable that the

¹ It is interesting to note that Prince Albert and the Queen realized the need for being sure of such a point before declaring war. *Letters*, vol. III, pp. 14-17.

Prince Albert wrote on January 24th, 1854, that the worst thing about the war is that ‘it cannot be carried on to any effective end. Russia is a vast and ponderous mass upon which blows in the few spots where they can be planted will make no impression. If Prussia and Austria go with us, then the case is altered and war becomes practically impossible for Russia.’ *Correspondence*.

fleet should remain in Besika Bay through September: it followed that the autumnal storms should not that year commence until October.

But criticism of this sort is of the twentieth century. Contemporary observers felt no forebodings. In January 1853 the new Government seemed likely to pursue a harmonious course in foreign politics. 'England,' wrote Lord Aberdeen to the King of the Belgians, 'will occupy her true position in Europe as the constant advocate of moderation and peace.' Who would prevent it? Palmerston, it is true, differed fundamentally from Aberdeen on foreign affairs, and on this ground had at first hesitated to join the Cabinet. But he was safely at the Home Office and not directly responsible for our foreign policy. Nor was he ever a lover of war; he was merely willing to risk more than other people. The only European complication at the moment was the popular agitation against Napoleon III, and Lord Palmerston, so far from leading in this hostility, was more inclined to be friendly to France than any of his colleagues.

For the rest, the Cabinet was strongly pacific. No member of the Manchester School could have hated war with more sincerity than the Premier. Alone among the statesmen of the period, he had seen a living battlefield. After witnessing Leipzig, in the company of Prince Metternich, he had written: 'It must be owned that a victory is a fine thing, but one should be at a distance to appreciate it.'

Lord Aberdeen's detestation of a 'sporting' foreign policy was shared by the large majority of his colleagues. Mr. Gladstone, Sidney Herbert, Sir James Graham, and the Duke of Newcastle had all voted against Lord Palmerston in the affair of Don Pacifico, and Mr. Gladstone and Sir James Graham had been among his most determined opponents in the debate. Moreover, not only were these men all adherents of a 'non-interventionist' policy, they were also avowed opponents of a 'pro-Turkish' policy. In addition, Lord Clarendon was as strong in his antipathy to the Turks as Aberdeen, and the Duke of Argyll, who was his devoted supporter, declared that 'the

integrity and independence of Turkish Empire' was a phrase 'grotesquely inconsistent with the facts'. Finally, Sir William Molesworth was a Radical and a friend of Richard Cobden and therefore was expected to be in favour of a peaceful policy though he was notoriously consistent in his hostility to Russia.

Only four members of the Cabinet had voted in favour of Lord Palmerston in 1850. Their primary reason for doing so was that, as members of the Whig Government, they could not vote against their own Foreign Secretary. Lord Granville, who had been one of the chief promoters of the Exhibition in 1851, and had taken Palmerston's place after his dismissal in 1852, was always distinguished by his conciliatory attitude to foreign Powers.¹ Sir Charles Wood was absorbed in the reform of Indian administration and took little part in discussions of foreign affairs. Lord Lansdowne, as leader of the Whig Party in the Lords in 1850, had supported Palmerston, and was probably more in agreement with him than any other member of the Government. But he was an old man inclined to caution, and much under the influence of Aberdeen. As to Lord John Russell, he had not approved of the policy of his Foreign Secretary, and had hesitated whether or not to seize the Don Pacifico incident as an opportunity to dismiss him. A better opportunity had occurred a little later. Since then Palmerston's power had steadily grown, and Lord John's jealousy was no secret. It was highly unlikely that he would follow Palmerston's lead in foreign or any other kind of politics.

It seemed then that a new Don Pacifico incident would probably leave Lord Palmerston to fight a lonely battle.

THE NEWSPAPERS

Before the end of the eighteenth century Jeremy Bentham had decided that the success of political democracy depended on the

¹ 'Lord Granville was in later years the Foreign Minister after Bright's own heart, and his personal friend.' In 1889, after Bright's death, he said in the House of Lords that in 1853 he had asked Lord Aberdeen why he did not invite Bright to join the Government—a remarkable proof of his pacific inclination. Trevelyan, *G.M.*, p. 230 and note.

establishment of a free newspaper Press. Having discovered the need for a new institution, he followed his usual method of procedure; he drew up rules for its organization, converted his disciples to his suggestions, assisted at its birth, watched over its infancy, and died before its frailty was manifest. When he first wrote there were only two kinds of journalist—the jackal of the politicians in power and the literary man on holiday. A regular journalist was a creature for contempt: while the occasional excursions into political controversy, indulged in by the feebler successors of Junius, did little to trouble the administrations of Pitt and Canning. When Bentham died the days of William Gifford were over as surely as those of Junius himself. The newspaper editor had achieved something of the dignity which Bentham had demanded for him as ‘President of the Public Opinion Tribunal’.

Some small part of the change may be attributed to Bentham himself. He had founded the *Westminster Review*, and John Stuart Mill had edited it. Albany Fonblanque, who succeeded Leigh Hunt in the days ‘when an epigram in the *Examiner* was like a big gun echoing all over the country’, had been, like Black of the *Chronicle*, a disciple of Bentham and a friend of James Mill. The *Westminster Review* and the *Examiner* did much to keep the utilitarian point of view before the minds of middle-class Radicals. Cobbett did still more for the profession of journalism by demonstrating the power of a continuous and courageous newspaper invective. For the Whigs, during their long period of political impotence, the *Edinburgh Review* alone provided a message and a hope. Brilliant writers who had hitherto scattered their energies in occasional articles now formed themselves into a single body of journalists whose criticism only a Lord Eldon could ignore. Of the first editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, Bagehot wrote: ‘Jeffrey was no everyday man. He invented the trade of editorship: before him an editor was a bookseller’s dupe, he is now a distinguished functionary.’

The first great editors then were editors of periodicals. But

with the widening of English political life after the Reform Bill, aided by the discovery of steam printing, the daily papers, hitherto of no great importance, began to assume leadership.¹ Periodicals began to take a second place. They ceased to be the centres of living controversy, and became the register of received opinion.

In the new era, *The Times*, already the greatest daily paper, quickly rose to a supreme position. In 1840 its daily circulation of 10,000 copies was more than twice that of any other paper. In 1852 it possessed a circulation of 40,000, while its nearest rival could claim only 7,000. Its influence was believed to be correspondingly great. Lord Clarendon wrote: 'It is a well-known fact that *The Times* forms or guides or reflects—no matter which—the public opinion of England.'

A large part of this success was due to the ability of its editors. John Barnes, who died in 1841, was called by Lord Lyndhurst 'the most powerful man in England'. Under his management *The Times* gained its curious 'semi-official' position. But it was under his successor, John Thaddeus Delane, that it became admittedly the first paper in Europe.

Delane was an Irishman by descent and a country gentleman by instinct. In 1840, at the age of twenty-three, with an undistinguished degree, the reputation of being the best horseman in Oxford, and with no particular prospects, he entered the office of *The Times* of which his father was financial manager. In the following year John Barnes died and Mr. John Walter, who had noticed unsuspected qualities in Delane, appointed him editor of the paper.

Mr. Walter gave the new editor a free hand. He was satisfied with his dividends, proud of the influence of the paper, and while these suffered no diminution, interfered but little in its management or policy. As editor of *The Times*, Delane found

¹ Daily papers still cost 5*d.* It was not until the removal of the most burdensome of the taxes on knowledge in 1853 that a penny paper could appear. In 1853 there was still a tax of 1*s.* 6*d.* on every advertisement, an excise duty on paper, and a newspaper stamp of 1*d.* on each sheet. This meant that the working-class readership was mainly confined to the Sunday papers.

that he was the recipient of Ministerial confidences and in return was expected to support the Government. He accepted this position but greatly increased his independence by making friends with members of all political parties. He maintained a correspondence both with the Opposition and with the Ministry, and gained additional information from friends in France and other European countries. The 'leaders' of *The Times* were usually based on inside information and were written by brilliant men of his own choosing. They were read in every European Court and Cabinet, and foreign statesmen were apt to assume that the voice of *The Times* was the voice of the British public.

Delane's power is difficult to gauge. Clarendon was not sure whether *The Times* formed or guided or reflected public opinion. Perhaps it merely said what Delane and a few of his political friends thought at the moment! At any rate Delane did not suffer from the restrictions that bind the modern editor. He was not dictated to by advertisers, by party financiers, or by a millionaire proprietor. Moreover, since he had no competitor to fear, Delane was able, for a time at least, to advocate a view offensive to a large number of his readers. When this occurred he received unstinted abuse, but the circulation of *The Times* did not diminish. It was commonly agreed that he could make or unmake Governments. He extracted apologies from the most powerful of statesmen and frequently received letters—almost of apology—from those whose conduct he had condemned. There was an undignified competition for his support. In 1852 Disraeli wrote four letters within forty-eight hours requesting the favour of *The Times*, and received, by way of return, a cutting editorial describing him as an 'inimitable illusionist' entertaining the public at the 'pantomime of St. Stephen's'.

Delane fully realized that power implied responsibility. From 1846 to 1852 he constantly opposed the methods of Palmerston in foreign affairs, even though *The Times* thereby 'lost considerably in popularity'. He particularly inveighed against the

national enthusiasm for Kossuth.¹ On one matter, however, he agreed with the Liberals—he had the liveliest detestation of Louis Napoleon. The consequent hostility of *The Times* to the new ruler of France led to a correspondence between Lord Granville, the Foreign Secretary, on the one hand, and Henry Reeve² and Delane on the other, in which they discussed the duties of a newspaper editor in days when the personality of a daily-paper editor was still important.

The *coup d'état* of December 2nd had been consistently denounced in the strongest terms in *The Times*. Lord Granville, who well knew that a *de facto* Government must in course of time be recognized by other Governments, wrote to Reeve, thanking him for news of the situation in France, but complaining that Napoleon was irritated and annoyed beyond measure by the language of *The Times*. 'However such castigation may be deserved,' he said, 'it will be a serious responsibility to goad him on to acts of violence which may be seriously inconvenient to us.'

Reeve, while admitting that two or three letters had been written which 'passed the bounds of just commentary', defended his position: 'The responsibility of journalists is in proportion to the liberty they enjoy. No moral obligation can be graver. But their duties are not the same, I think, as those of statesmen. To find out the true state of affairs, to report them with fidelity, to apply to them fixed and true principles of justice, humanity, and law, to inform, as far as possible, the very conscience of nations, and to call down the judgment of the world on what is false, or base, or tyrannical, appear to me to be the first duties of those who write. Those on whom the great part of political action devolves are necessarily governed by other rules.'

¹ So unpopular was *The Times* made by its opposition to Kossuth that Cobden wrote: '*The Times* has had a slap in the face which it will not soon forget or forgive. It has been fairly cowed by the universal execration it has brought upon itself. Yet what an absurd position we are in. So completely dictated to and domineered over by one newspaper that it requires a periodical revolt of the whole people to keep the despot in tolerable order.'

² Henry Reeve, Delane's best foreign leader writer, was the editor of Greville's *Journal* and the translator of de Tocqueville.

Delane, to whom this letter was sent, heartily approved of Reeve's reply, and added that Lord Granville had 'no necessary concern with the French people and its institutions except as they directly affect England. . . . Whatever he may feel as a private person, he, in his dealings with the French Government, is as much bound to suppress as we are to publish our opinions.'

The function of the journalist has perhaps never been more clearly put forward. The editor's task is two-fold: to publish the news and to comment on it in accordance with the 'true principles of justice and humanity'. He is, in the words of Bentham, the 'President of a Public Opinion Tribunal, pledged to no party, enlisted only in the service of the "greatest happiness principle"'. This was the ideal, but the true principles of justice and humanity were sometimes singularly elusive.

Delane was not given to introspection. If he had been, the events of 1853 might have suggested to him the need of some less simple formula. There were many complications. An initial difficulty was the conflict of loyalties. What if there should be, on some rare occasion, a discrepancy between the interests of England and the 'true principles of justice and humanity'? Again, what if the claims of friendship and inclination pointed one way and those of principle another? Or, worst of all, what if the turmoil of great events should bring no clear leading, but only doubt?

All these questions arose. But for the journalist there was one even more difficult. Delane was confronted with the oldest problem of democracy: was he to give the public 'what it wanted' or what he believed to be good for it? If the latter, was the whole influence of *The Times* to be sacrificed by the persistent advocacy of a view which the country would not accept? And if persuasion failed to bring his readers to reason, should the journalist betray his high calling 'to report all the facts with fidelity' and think rather of the immediate and very pressing question of restraining them from acts of folly?

The truth is that Delane's Benthamite theory broke down

before the irrationality of his readers. Ultimately *The Times* depended on the public. If the public preferred what was not true, and wished to act in a manner which did not seem justified by the facts, the editor, in the last resort, was forced to choose between the ideal he had set himself and the retention of his influence by compromise.

So Delane, beginning in 1853 with a fear of Napoleon and a contempt for the Turk, an affection for Aberdeen and an abhorrence of Palmerston's policy, gradually found himself favouring an alliance with Napoleon whom he continued to distrust, advocating a war on behalf of Turkey, which he still believed, as late as September, to be the headquarters of 'barbarism', increasingly diverging from Aberdeen, and finally taking a principal part in overthrowing him in favour of the popular hero, Lord Palmerston. Some part of this reversal of position was due, no doubt, to a considered change of opinion, but no one who reads the story of 1853 can fail to see that it was the public which led and *The Times* which followed. Delane, like other conscientious men, first hesitated, then compromised, and finally retained his peace of mind by a wholehearted conversion.

At the beginning of 1853, then, the Aberdeen Government was supported by *The Times*, and throughout the year there was a continual correspondence between Delane and Henry Reeve on the one side, and Aberdeen and Clarendon on the other. There was also a considerable indirect interchange of information and opinion between the Government and *The Times* through the medium of Charles Greville, who constantly talked with Clarendon, the Duke of Newcastle, and Henry Reeve.

The Government also expected support from the *Morning Chronicle* and its evening edition, the *Globe*. These papers had been both Liberal and Whig in the past, and had been used officially and unofficially by Russell and Palmerston.¹

¹ The *Chronicle*, from its foundation Liberal and literary, was edited 1821-43 by Black, a friend of John Stuart Mill. In 1834 its circulation had fallen to 1,000, and it was bought by a group of Whigs and regained a circulation of 6,000.

The *Globe* was edited by Colonel Robert Torrens, 'the political economist'. It

But in 1848 the *Chronicle* was purchased by a group of Peelites, including the Duke of Newcastle and Sidney Herbert. Its new editor was John Douglas Cook, who had once been a reporter of Delane's, and who was quite capable of acting independently of the paper's proprietors. But far the most interesting figure on the *Chronicle* was Abraham Hayward, who engaged in an extensive correspondence with some of the most distinguished politicians and authors in England and France.¹ He had been both energetic and useful in aiding Aberdeen during the formation of the Coalition in December 1852, and throughout 1853 did his best to support the Government. But in the excitement of the Eastern Question the alliance between the *Chronicle* and the Government was destroyed and by September the editor and his most able contributor, William Harcourt, were becoming 'bellicose'. Aberdeen ceased to make use of the *Chronicle*, and on September 14th Hayward wrote to Sir John Young, the Secretary for Ireland, complaining that the Government was not keeping its part of the bargain.

'Copies of public documents (the last dispatch of Lord Clarendon, published two days since, for example) are uniformly kept back from him and given to *The Times*. This is both unfair and impolitic. The *Chronicle* is the only morning paper that has uniformly supported the Government, and *The Times* constantly turns against it on the chance of gaining any stray ray of popularity. It is an error to measure utility by circulation. Every one of the leading papers is read at all clubs and reading rooms. Its good articles or arguments are reprinted or reproduced in the provincial papers or worked up anew in the shape of speeches, and always furnish topics for the friends of the party it advocates. It thus influences constituents and constituents command votes. Look at the position of a party without an organ during the Parliamentary recess. . . .' Hayward's warning

had frequently been used for official purposes, e.g. Lord Granville used it in 1852. Granville, vol. I, p. 55. For the use made of the *Globe* and the *Chronicle* by Lord John and Palmerston, vide Grant, vol. II, p. 73; *Cam. Hist.*, vol. III, p. 568; Fox-Bourne, vol. II, pp. 95, 169.

¹ Louis Napoleon, Thiers, Macaulay, Sydney Smith, Lockhart, Lord Lansdowne, and Lord Lyndhurst were among his guests and correspondents.

went unheeded, and in 1854 the Peelite Party was left without any newspaper support.

The Aberdeen Cabinet represented the Whigs and Radicals as well as the Peelites. At the beginning of 1853, therefore, it was supported by papers which were bitterly hostile to Lord Aberdeen himself. The *Daily News*, edited by Knight Hunt and famous for Harriet Martineau's contributions, was inclined to support a Free Trade Government which contained Sir William Molesworth.¹

For similar reasons the *Manchester Guardian*, already a judicious and carefully written paper, naturally began by supporting the Coalition.² Even the *Morning Advertiser*, which was bought almost exclusively by keepers of public houses and Members of Parliament, and yet had the second circulation in the kingdom,³ was inclined at the beginning of the session to tolerate a Cabinet of which Lord Palmerston was a member.

Lord Palmerston himself was not content with a general popularity in Whig and Radical newspapers. He preferred to have a paper which would owe allegiance to himself rather than to his party. The *Morning Chronicle* and the *Globe* were no longer available. But he had formed a new alliance of a more certain character.

The *Morning Post* was nominally a Tory paper and the property of a staunch Conservative. But the daily management was left in the hands of its editor, Peter Borthwick, who was an admirer and friend of Lord Palmerston. A steady

¹ The great days of the *Daily News* did not come until the Crimean War had given it a great opportunity. At this time it stood for Radical heterodoxy, Free Trade, and Palmerstonian foreign policy. Douglas Jerrold wrote of it: 'There is no God and Harriet Martineau is his prophet.'

² The *Manchester Guardian* was published twice weekly. There was no provincial daily paper, and provincial weeklies took their news from London papers, and for the most part did little more than summarize the views stated during the week by the London organ of their party.

³ The *Morning Advertiser*, nicknamed 'Gin and Gospel', was a liquor benefit society which insured publicans, paying them from 7s. to 10s. a week in time of difficulty. It was not taken in by private houses but had a circulation in 1850 of 5,000, in 1853 of 7,000, in 1854 of 8,000, in public houses, coffee shops, and clubs. It was strongly Radical until the Licensing Act of 1868. James Grant, its editor at this time, was a Scottish Presbyterian, a hymn writer, and author of the *Newspaper Press*.

correspondence was maintained between them, with the result that during the years 1848-52 the *Morning Post* alone was always satisfied with the conduct of English foreign policy.

In 1849, the *Morning Post's* attack on Austria and Russia had been directed by Palmerston. On one occasion, at least, he wrote a letter containing all the material necessary for a leading article. In July 1850, we find him explaining his views on currency; in August, discussing the stability of the Austrian Empire; in October, deriding the 'Papal Aggression'; and in December, speculating on the character of the young Emperor of Austria and the nature of the Government of Louis Napoleon. In January 1852, he expressed satisfaction that the *Post* had not attacked the Prince on the occasion of his dismissal in December 1851, because it was 'less evil for the country that any number of Ministers should be sent to the right-about than that the good will and attachment of the people to the sovereign and her consort should be impaired'. He urged that it was 'wretched nonsense to imagine that the French do not contemplate an invasion of England as an attempt to be made in possible contingencies, and that it is therefore our business to prepare ourselves without panic'.

During the crisis of 1851, the special correspondent of the *Morning Post* in Paris was the editor's own son, Algernon Borthwick. He had made many friends in Paris, among whom was Louis Napoleon himself. At the time of the *coup d'état* he interviewed the Emperor and sent home an account to the *Morning Post*, based on his own words. His constant letters to Peter Borthwick were well informed and amusing. They were also entirely favourable to Louis Napoleon and enthusiastic in their support of Palmerston's foreign policy. It was not then surprising that both Palmerston and Louis Napoleon expressed approbation of Algernon's work. Mrs. Borthwick, too, was delighted. In February she wrote to Algernon: 'We went to Lady Palmerston's last Saturday. Your papa had two hours with him on Sunday and showed him your last long letter.'

Lord P. said it was very interesting and very true.' The great man even declared that Algernon was 'the only man—next to himself—fit to be Foreign Secretary'. Louis Napoleon contented himself with warmly thanking Peter Borthwick for 'the impartial view the *Morning Post* has taken of French affairs'.

In the spring of 1852, Peter Borthwick retired and Algernon returned from Paris to take his father's place. He continued his intimate connection with the French Government. He saw the French Ambassador, Walewski, 'every day', and, according to one account, received money in exchange for his support. Lord Malmesbury, then Foreign Secretary, perhaps naturally complained when 'an article in the *Morning Post* from its correspondent in Paris' retailed 'nearly every word' of his last conversation with Walewski.

The Ministry, of which Malmesbury was a member, approached the editor himself. A certain 'Mr. P. sent by a member of the Government' called upon Algernon Borthwick and offered Government information in return for the support of the *Morning Post*. He explained that the Tories were 'dissatisfied with the *Herald* and were desirous of securing a valuable organ and in the cheapest manner possible'. The offer was refused. The *Morning Post* was already bought. Moreover, Algernon Borthwick had no desire for a new alliance, however tactfully offered. He agreed with his father's summary of the situation: 'The Government may communicate with you directly if it seems good to them, but we cannot sacrifice that independence of party and that strong adherence to principle which constitutes the character and the chief value of a newspaper.'

During 1852, the Derby Ministry grew increasingly 'dissatisfied with the *Herald* and its evening edition, the *Standard*'. The violence of their support did not atone for their lack of discrimination. Ministers did their best to disavow any connection with such unwise friends. Disraeli, in spite of his former rebuff, wrote to Delane, thanking him for such support as *The Times* had given to the new Ministry, and apologizing for the fact that a 'quasi-authentic version of the [Queen's] Speech'

had appeared in the *Morning Herald*. 'The *Morning Herald* is not my organ and I trust never will be; in fact, I never wish to see my name in its columns. But I'm bound to tell you, because I know it, that the version in question proceeded from no member of the Government. A guest of Lord Derby, I suspect to be the traitor—not, however, a traitor in office.'

On a later and more serious occasion he again disclaimed all responsibility for the behaviour of the Tory papers. He wrote to Mr. Ponsonby that 'far from having much influence over the papers you mention, I not only have none, but they are my secret or my avowed foes. . . . The truth is, great errors exist as to the influence of party leaders over what are esteemed party journals. Holding them by no proprietary tie, and indebted to us for no pecuniary aid, they look only to their circulation, and will follow up any cry which they believe tends to increase their sale.'

If, in 1849, Disraeli had found the state of the Tory Press 'deplorable', in 1853 he found it intolerable. 'It seems,' he complained, 'that the whole ability of the country is arrayed against us, and the rising generation is half ashamed of a cause which would seem to have neither wit nor reason to sustain and adorn it.' He, therefore, proposed to found a weekly paper, and himself to supervise its production. The Tory Party was no longer to lack either wit or reason.¹

The first number of the *Press* appeared on May 7th, 1853. The editorial, written by Disraeli himself, was a masterpiece of invective, and throughout the whole period of the Coalition Ministry there was no relaxation either in the acidity of his wit or in the virulence of his vituperation. It was well known, during this period, that he wrote in almost every number, though he made elaborate and sometimes amusing efforts to hide his identity.² Lord Aberdeen, against whom his bitterest sallies

¹ For the origin of the *Press*, vide Buckle, *Life of Disraeli*, vol. III, pp. 489-91. Disraeli continued his intimate connection with it until February 1856, and retained his ownership until 1858. It achieved at its best a circulation of 3,500. Its finances were always somewhat troubled.

² Disraeli, for instance, criticized one of his own speeches as 'in our opinion much too long and savouring somewhat of the Yankee school of rhetoric'.

were directed, had no difficulty in detecting their origin. Disraeli's wit, occasional in his novels, mordant in his speeches, and deliberately cruel in his journalism, is everywhere unmistakably his own. The Premier was not unconscious of its sting and was at length driven to complain in the House of the 'malignity and misrepresentations' to which he had been subjected. Perhaps the fact that amid the misrepresentations there was sometimes a sharp edge of truth added vehemence to Aberdeen's protest.

In 1853, then, the Tory point of view was expressed in the daily commonplaces of the *Herald* and in the weekly brilliance of the *Press*. Among the other Tory weeklies the most interesting was *John Bull*, which, though no longer enlivened by the humour of Theodore Hook, still retained the gaiety of complete irresponsibility. *John Bull* was always outspoken, and its fear of invasion from France was surpassed only by its dread of the Roman religion. Equally devout, but more cautious, was the *Guardian*, which came nearest to expressing the religious convictions of Mr. Gladstone.

Among the Radicals there was still a strong body of Non-conformist pacifists. They had no daily paper. Both *The Times* and the *Manchester Guardian* reported their meetings at length and offered them careful criticism. A monthly paper, the *Herald of Peace*, expressed the views of the more extreme section of the Peace Society.

An examination of the papers so far described will give us a fair estimate of the views of the voting population. It will exclude that great mass of citizens who were unrepresented in the House of Commons. Working-class people could not afford a daily paper at fivepence, even if it had been intended to interest them. Most of the Chartist papers of the forties had died with the movement which gave them birth. But we may find in two widely read Sunday papers an expression of the views of the thinking section of the working class.

The *Weekly Dispatch*, famous for its articles by 'Publicola', was Radical in its views, inclined towards Republicanism, and

was unabashed by charges of atheism.¹ It was not seriously interested in foreign affairs but was largely devoted to the cause of distressed operatives, to police news, and to the abolition of the remaining 'taxes on knowledge'. *Reynolds's Weekly*,² on the other hand, was always well informed on foreign policy, and enthusiastically supported Kossuth and other heroes of European democracy. Unlike the *Weekly Dispatch*, also, it was well printed and never dull. It was definitely Chartist in its outlook, and many of its readers were former adherents of Feargus O'Connor and the *Northern Star*.

We have now covered almost the whole field of the national newspaper Press. In times of excitement, however, we may find indications of opinion outside the newspapers. Pamphlets appear; public meetings are called; broadsides and popular songs display political sentiment where reasoned opinion is commonly lacking. In an analysis of public opinion, therefore, we must regard these as symptoms. They will be, in some degree, a test of the success of newspaper propaganda.

It should be clear from this account of the position of the English Press in 1853 that articulate public opinion was likely to favour Palmerston rather than Aberdeen. On Aberdeen's side were *The Times* and the *Chronicle*. Against him were almost all the other English newspapers even though, at first, some of them supported his Government. On Palmerston's side was the general popularity of his policy and the charm of his personality. There was also one newspaper directly inspired by him. The alliance between Palmerston and the *Morning Post* was no secret, though the degree of its intimacy was a matter of guesswork. The *Post*, therefore, had an importance far greater than its circulation would at first suggest; for it early betrayed the disunity of the Cabinet. From the time when the divergence between the *Post* and *The Times* first became obvious, the cause

¹ Its circulation in 1855 was 38,000. For the history of its struggle with *The Times* in 1840, under the leadership of James Horner and William Johnson Fox, vide Fox-Bourne, vol. II, p. 103.

² Reynolds was a Chartist who had taken to journalism and the writing of doubtful fiction. His *Weekly* was founded in 1850. It cost fourpence. Its circulation in 1855 was about 50,000.

THE TRIUMPH OF LORD PALMERSTON

of the *Post* was taken up with enthusiasm by all who loved Palmerston or hated Aberdeen. Party rivalry, Liberal sentiment, and natural pugnacity all compelled a simultaneous attack. This attack had no connection with the merits of any particular issue. It so happened that the Eastern Question provided the material for the struggle, but any other question on which Palmerston and Aberdeen were known to differ would have served the same purpose.

We are now in a position to examine the interaction of these factors during 1853.

'The Simple Duties of a Peacemaker'
(January-June 1853)

THE CABINET AND LORD STRATFORD
(January-March)

IN January 1853 the prospects of the new Ministry seemed excellent. No one could doubt the ability of its members and Lord Aberdeen's friends were delighted with his triumphant achievement of a task which had been pronounced impossible. Lord John was at length satisfied and agreed to postpone the introduction of his Reform Bill until the following winter. Finance seemed the most likely source of danger. Mr. Disraeli would undoubtedly seek revenge for his previous year's defeat, and rumour had it that Mr. Gladstone's Budget was destined to be a bold one. If eloquence could persuade the House of Commons that the differentiation of the income tax was contrary to the Divine plan, the Ministry was safe.¹

Foreign affairs were troublesome, but not, for the moment, dangerous. The agitation against Louis Napoleon was not abated. There was a rumour that he was about to seize the Channel Islands, and in February Lord Palmerston wrote to Sidney Herbert that, in his opinion, the danger was real. 'In the present state of things the French might by steam easily throw a large body of troops into the Channel Islands. . . . The Duke of Wellington, who was a good judge of strategy, attached the greatest importance to these islands as a military position. The best thing would be to fortify them all. . . .' Mr Sidney Herbert, however, considered that the institution of a military

¹ Mr. Gladstone was successful, and it was largely due to his personal scruples that differentiation between earned and unearned incomes was postponed till the twentieth century.

camp at Chobham and a grand naval review would be sufficient to dispel the popular excitement.¹

In the East, a dispute between Turkey and Austria, who had sent Count Leiningen to demand the Turkish evacuation of Bosnia, did not at first seem to affect England, and even when Russia complained that the Porte was not carrying out her obligations in the Holy Place the question was not considered important enough to become a matter for Cabinet discussion. The news that the Tsar had again expressed his view that Turkey was a 'sick man' did not alarm Lord John or Aberdeen: the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire had been envisaged in the protocol of 1844 and was expected by most competent authorities. When it was announced that the Tsar was sending Prince Menschikoff on an extraordinary mission to Constantinople, Lord John was assured by Brunnow, the Russian Ambassador in London, that the Tsar had no intention of making new demands but merely desired to persuade Turkey to carry out her obligations under existing treaties. It was clear, however, that a 'mere chargé d'affaires' was no longer competent to watch over British interests in the East and Sir Stratford-Canning was given a peereage and once more dispatched as our ambassador to the Porte. The decision was not

¹ For the effect of Chobham Camp on the panic the following popular ballad is suggestive:

'CHOBHAM CAMP (1850)

'From Spain and France the mob will dance,
To Chobham Heath so hearty,
And on the ground I'll bet a pound,
The Emperor Bonaparte,
Would like to be, our Queen to see,
And gaily to behold her,
Eyes left and right in armour bright
View England's gallant soldiers.

In pleasant June, such glorious tunes
On Chobham Heath will cheer us,
And ev'ry nation in the world,
In time of war shall fear us.
Britannia's deeds proud France may read,
Victory all times did crown her,
If Boney comes to Chobham Camp
We'll show him English power.'

('Chobham Camp', a ballad preserved in the British Museum.)



A CONSULTATION ABOUT THE STATE OF TURKEY.

Punch: 17 September 1853

made without hesitation. Lord Stratford was not indeed an ordinary ambassador.

Among the many undecided questions of British administration not the least important was the relationship of our ambassadors abroad with the Ministry in power. The Cabinet depended on the foreign embassies for much of its information, not only of the official proceedings of foreign Governments, but also of those unofficial conversations which form the hidden substance of diplomacy. Further, the Cabinet relied on the embassy to communicate its views and intentions to foreign Governments. Theoretically, no doubt, the relationship between ambassador and Foreign Minister was simple enough. In practice complications arose. The ambassador might hold personal views which conflicted with the official ones of his Cabinet. The distinction between private and public is often hard to find, and opinions, expressed unofficially, sometimes assume more importance than imperial statements.

Even in Paris difficulties had arisen, and a change of Ministry was sometimes found to necessitate a change of ambassador. In the case of a distant capital, to which the telegraphic system had not yet reached, the ambassador necessarily exercised a wide personal discretion. How independent an embassy could be under these circumstances had been fully demonstrated by Sir Stratford-Canning in the matter of the refugees in 1849.¹

Lord Stratford's position at the Porte was of a peculiar nature. His ability, his experience, and his authority were unique. He had been ambassador at Constantinople five times and had already spent forty years cutting the diplomatic knots of Europe. He was fully alive to the evils of Turkish misrule and set himself to encourage reform by the establishment of English influence. Turkey he treated as a wilful child to be guided, cajoled, rewarded, bullied, and, if necessary, punished. He offered protection and expected obedience. He had his own policy for Turkey and knew it to be the right one. He did not

¹ The telegraphic system had extended only as far as Vienna in 1849 and the record speed for a messenger was sixteen days. Vide S. Lane Poole's romantic footnote, in *The Life of Stratford-Canning*, vol. II, p. 194.

compromise. For expediency, we are told by Lane Poole, Stratford-Canning’s biographer, he had no respect: ‘Right and wrong he knew, but the expedient was a middle course which he refused to recognize.’ Right was clearly on the side of Reshid Pasha whose party was pledged to reforms of which Lord Stratford approved. With a clear conscience, therefore, he sought by all the forces of intrigue by night, and intimidation by day, to secure success for his favourite Minister.

This high-minded policy led him to engage in a continuous running warfare with the Tsar, whose influence at the Porte was in a direction opposite to his own. Their enmity was notorious, and on one occasion the Tsar had taken the unusual step of refusing to accept Lord Stratford as ambassador at St. Petersburg. Some men might have allowed their policy to be affected by this treatment. But Lord Stratford was no ordinary man. ‘He felt,’ we are told, ‘that it belonged to him to sustain the dignity of the Queen by every act; that he was the embodiment of the Crown in the eyes of the Court to which he was accredited; that a slight offered to him was an insult to his sovereign. This high and noble feeling,’ his biographer adds, ‘had nothing personal in it.’¹

Human motives, however, are seldom simple, and those who worked with Lord Stratford were not always equally confident. The home Government at any rate would have preferred more obedience and less high-mindedness. Lord Aberdeen had already found difficulty in working with so independent an ambassador, and on one occasion spoke of the need of ‘bringing him to his senses’. Sir James Graham, a few months later, declared that, ‘notwithstanding the peremptory order to the contrary’, Lord Stratford was ‘quite capable of advising the Turks to be refractory’. This was the opinion not only of members of the Cabinet but also of other ambassadors.

If opinions of this sort could be held before definite evidence of his disobedience was forthcoming, it is easy to understand why

¹ Lane Poole, vol. II, p. 57. Lane Poole’s judgment of Lord Stratford seems to come direct from Kinglake, but the latter does, in one place, admit that his hero was, after all, ‘an imperfect Christian’. Kinglake, vol. I, p. 119.

Lord Aberdeen wrote to Lord John that 'it will be necessary to be very careful in preparing instructions for Lord Stratford'. Clearly he would have preferred not to make the appointment. Yet the difficulties in the way of refusing to nominate Stratford seemed greater. He was indisputably able, popular at home, and unique in his influence with the reforming party in Turkey. Above all, the cordial dislike that existed between him and the Tsar was well known: a refusal to send Lord Stratford would have been interpreted at home as an unwarranted concession to the Tsar. Was it better to offend the Tsar or public opinion? There was as yet no reason to believe that the negotiations were dangerous, and the Tsar was less menacing than the daily paper. Lord John sent Stratford, and the Government had made its first concession to public opinion.¹

It so happens that some curious evidence is accessible which helps to explain Lord Stratford's persistent popularity with the Press. A. H. Layard, who long worked with the British Embassy at Constantinople, and who first went out as a newspaper correspondent, writes as follows: 'It was of much importance to Sir Stratford that he should have the support of the English and European Press. My friendship with Mr. Longworth, who was then correspondent of the *Morning Post*, and my acquaintance with many other newspaper correspondents, enabled me to hold out good hopes to him that I should be able to obtain from them that support and induce them to write favourably of his policy, and to put forward any views with regard to it which he might desire should be generally known. I was as good as my word. . . . The unanimity of so large a portion of the public Press in approving the policy of Sir Stratford-Canning greatly strengthened his position and influence in Constantinople, and secured for him the support of public opinion in England. He was thus able to carry out many of his own views, which were not always in accordance with those of Lord Aberdeen and the English Government, and to compel the Porte to adopt measures and

¹ Stratford's biographer uses the language of hyperbole at this point. 'There arose a universal cry for Lord Stratford to return and protect his ancient ward. Ministers bowed to the necessity.' Lane Poole, vol. II, pp. 226-7.

to introduce reforms which he conscientiously believed would tend to promote the well-being of the Ottoman Empire and especially of its Christian populations, and, at the same time, the interests of England. There was thus a chorus of praise of the English ambassador in the European Press, and I learnt by experience how much the success and reputation of a diplomatist may depend upon his skill in obtaining the support of newspaper correspondents and their incessant and exaggerated approval of all that he says and does. The public can only be guided by reports coming from such quarters, and is only too ready to believe everything that is written concerning a man who is so universally commended.’

THE SAILING OF THE FLEET

(The Cabinet—March–June)

In March, Clarendon took Lord John’s place at the Foreign Office. The new Minister stood, in many ways, in sharp contrast to Lord John. He was suave where Lord John was acrimonious, and his suavity was most remarkable in his dispatches—which was just where Lord John’s bluntness was most disconcerting. The only disadvantage was that, whereas Lord John’s meaning was always terribly obvious, it was sometimes difficult to be sure just where Clarendon’s ‘limpid flow of delicate words’ had taken you. He worked indefatigably though with curious irregularity. His skill in diplomatic compromise made relations smooth, at least for the time, not only between nations but also between Cabinet personalities. ‘He is,’ writes Algernon Cecil, ‘one of the very few men, perhaps the only man, with a right to be called a *diplomate de carrière*, who ever held the seals of the Foreign Office.’

On assuming office, Clarendon found that the Eastern Question had taken on a new and menacing aspect. Russia was said to be gathering troops on the borders of the Principalities in support of demands which were not confined to the question of the Holy Places.

Prince Menschikoff's behaviour was undoubtedly arrogant and Fuad Effendi's enforced resignation suggested that French interests at the Porte might suffer. Louis Napoleon, therefore, ordered his fleet to sail to Salamis, and Colonel Rose, who before Lord Stratford's arrival was in command at the embassy, invited Admiral Dundas to advance in company with the French fleet.

On the arrival of the dispatches from Rose and Dundas, Lord Clarendon, having sent for Lord John, also summoned Palmerston in the hope, as Greville put it, that this deferential treatment would 'keep him in a good humour'; Sir James Graham was also at hand. The question of the advance of our fleet was therefore discussed by Aberdeen, Palmerston, John Russell, Graham, and Clarendon. They decided to reply to Colonel Rose that Admiral Dundas had been wise in refusing to co-operate with Napoleon, whose action seemed unnecessary and provocative.

This pacific policy was adopted by the five men who were throughout all the subsequent negotiations really responsible for England's attitude. On this occasion a decision was reached without great difficulty, but the differences of outlook and temperament which were ultimately to wreck the harmony of the Cabinet were already discernible. All were agreed that it was a primary duty to preserve peace. All were agreed that Russia must not be allowed to occupy Constantinople and that Turkey must, if possible, be maintained there for some time longer. But they differed as to the right method of preserving the peace, as to the real intentions of Russia, and as to the state and merits of the Ottoman Empire.

Lord John Russell and Lord Palmerston believed that a bold policy of coercion was the right one in regard to Russia. In 1849 the Tsar had resigned his claim upon the Hungarian refugees in Turkey in face of English determination. They believed he would resign his new demands under similar pressure. The very mention of Russian demands at Constantinople was enough to recall the picture of 1849. When Lord Clarendon communi-

cated the situation to Lord John, ‘he got an answer from him, full of very wild talk of strong measures to be taken, and a fleet sent to the Baltic to make peremptory demands on the Emperor of Russia. This, however, he [Clarendon] took no notice of, and did not say one word to Aberdeen about it, quietly letting it drop, and accordingly he heard no more about it. . . .’

Lord Palmerston entertained the same views, but was more cautious. At the meeting ‘he did not say much and acquiesced in Aberdeen’s prudent and reserved intentions’, but from a few words that casually escaped him it was clear that he would have been ‘ready to join in more stringent and violent measures if they had been proposed’.

Lord Aberdeen was altogether opposed to such measures on behalf of Turkey, and Lord Clarendon and Sir James Graham were in agreement with him. To them the Eastern Question recalled quite a different set of images: the persecution of Christians, the incident of Navarino, and the freedom of Greece. In 1827, a British public had rejoiced to aid in the spoiling of the Turk, and Aberdeen could remember that Lord John Russell had been glad of the successes of Russia and Lord Palmerston had asked why the Turk should remain at Constantinople. Moreover, he knew the Tsar’s vanity, and was convinced that ‘assurances of prompt and effective aid in the approach of danger, given by us to the Porte, would in all probability produce war’.

At the outset, therefore, Lord Aberdeen believed that attempts to coerce the Tsar would merely exasperate him, while Lord Palmerston thought that they would intimidate him. This difference of opinion was closely connected with a second. Lord Palmerston believed that under Lord Stratford’s management Turkey would reform and continue to exercise its ‘progressively liberal system’ at Constantinople. Lord Aberdeen admitted that ‘to allow Russia to rejuvenate the sick man of Europe would be too expensive’, but thought that to allow Lord Stratford to act as doctor was almost equally dangerous. Moreover, he did not believe that any reform of the ‘crapulous

barbarians' was possible, and was only in agreement with other Cabinet Ministers when he declared that 'to talk of the independence and integrity of the Turkish Empire was absurd'. 'Every day,' he said, 'renders more certain the impossibility of any European sympathy with a system founded on ignorance and ferocity.'

When towards the end of April the Eastern Question became a matter of discussion in the Cabinet, these differences did not at first appear. 'There was not,' wrote Argyll, recalling the period many years afterwards, 'a shadow of difference among us as to the course which it was our duty to pursue.' The duty of England was to adhere to the principles of the former treaties; it was 'simply the duty of a peacemaker'. Further, all were agreed that we should be in a better position as peacemaker if we were acting in co-operation with France and, if possible, the German Powers. Success depended on Austrian support.

Difficulty, however, soon arose in the administration of this simple office of peacemaker. In the first place was it only Russia which was breaking the peace? Lord Aberdeen, at any rate, thought Napoleon's action in dispatching the fleet unnecessarily provocative, but there could be no doubt that the Tsar was endangering the peace when he mobilized troops on the frontiers of the Principalities, and at length, after a number of threatening Notes, actually gave Gortschakoff orders to cross the Pruth. These actions were particularly irritating because doubt existed, as it still exists, whether Prince Menschikoff had really been, in Nesselrode's words, only attempting to 'maintain the rights which had existed for ages', or whether, on the other hand, Lord Stratford was right in declaring that 'the guarantee required by Russia was objectionable to the Porte on grounds of real danger to its independence and . . . went far beyond the treaties existing'.

In view of the fact that the matter at issue was one of diplomatic verbiage, and that Russia had taken certain embarrassing and hostile steps, what was the just attitude of a peacemaker?

There were two possible attitudes. The first was Lord Aberdeen's: to continue to negotiate in conjunction with other Powers but without ourselves taking any hostile steps which would retard our freedom to withdraw if our part as peacemaker failed. The second was Lord Palmerston's: to utilize the fleet as a menace against the aggressor and thus enforce peace by presenting a bold front on behalf of Turkey. Possibly either policy, if wholeheartedly adopted, would have succeeded in preserving peace.

Unfortunately neither policy was adopted: a compromise was reached at every discussion. When Prince Menschikoff delivered an ultimatum and left the Porte, the threats of Russia were met by a Note to Lord Stratford empowering him to call up the fleet if necessary. Lord Aberdeen opposed this policy. ‘It is,’ he said, ‘a fearful power to place in the hands of any Minister, involving as it does, the question of peace and war.’

A little later, when the Tsar seemed about to enter the Principalities, Lord Palmerston proposed that such an action should be considered a *casus belli*. He was not supported and withdrew. A middle course was adopted. The fleet advanced to the entrance of the Dardanelles and Lord Clarendon, at the same time, wrote a forcible letter to Lord Stratford desiring him to explain to Turkey that our support depended on drastic reforms being carried out on behalf of the Christians under Ottoman rule, since the only real security for Turkey lay ‘in enlisting the feelings of the Christians on its behalf. The Turk must decide between the maintenance of an erroneous religious principle and the loss of the sympathy and support of the allies.’

This compromise between Lord Aberdeen's position and Lord Palmerston's was the work of Lord Clarendon. Without Aberdeen's confidence in the Tsar, or Palmerston's belief in Stratford, he acted as mediator. It was a fatal mediation. By this middle policy England was as much committed to support Turkey as she would have been if Palmerston's policy had been adopted outright. Lord Aberdeen realized that this hesitating encouragement of the Porte was dangerous. He wrote to

Clarendon: 'If we have good reason to expect an attack on Constantinople, and are disposed to quarrel with Russia for the protection of the Turks, we ought to approach the capital or rather to enter the Black Sea, by which means any naval move on the part of Russia could be effectually stopped. The only effect of such half measures as are recommended would be to release the Emperor of Russia from the obligations which he has voluntarily contracted towards us without accomplishing our own object. I think our best prospect of success is to be found in the union of the Four Powers, and in their firm but friendly representations at St. Petersburg.'

In view of such words as these it has naturally been asked why Aberdeen and Clarendon allowed themselves to be entangled in a quarrel on behalf of Turkey. The answer is not that Palmerston fought for his opinion or that a heated debate was followed by a vote on a compromise suggested by Clarendon. Nothing of this sort occurred. There was never any voting; if there had been, the Cabinet would almost all have voted with the Prime Minister. There was scarcely any debating. 'Palmerston urged his proposal perseveringly, but not disagreeably,' wrote Lord Aberdeen a little later, and he seems to have adopted this attitude from the beginning. Lord Clarendon provides us with the real explanation in a letter to Lord Aberdeen on May 31st. 'I recommend this [i.e. the dispatch of the fleets] as *the least measure that will satisfy public opinion* and save the Government from shame hereafter, if, as I firmly believe, the Russian hordes pour into Turkey from every side. It may do some good to ourselves, which should not be our last consideration.'

There was no need for Palmerston to put forward his position 'disagreeably': the newspapers in the country were doing that for him. Clarendon always declared that the public would not support a European war unless every possibility of peace had been exhausted. Aberdeen tried to think as little as possible about what the public would do. Palmerston, on the other hand, knew that the public would at first be delighted if war

‘THE SIMPLE DUTIES OF A PEACEMAKER’

broke out with Russia. Not that he wanted war. He had his own method of satisfying the public. He liked to steer ‘the ship of State in a high wind, on a rough sea, with every stitch of canvas on her that she could carry’, and then, at the last moment, to avoid the final collision by a dexterous turn of the wheel which left his colleagues gasping and the country satisfied. But he could not pilot the ship at the moment and it was with horror that Aberdeen and Clarendon found themselves in a position which would exactly have suited their colleague. The Coalition depended on an uncertain majority in the Commons; Members of Parliament were dependent on their constituents and were easily affected by the newspapers; if the Coalition was defeated, a more warlike Government would follow. It was, therefore, necessary to adopt ‘the least measure that would satisfy public opinion’—however little commendable the measure itself might appear.

It is now time to discover what Lord Clarendon meant by ‘public opinion’ at this stage, and ask why it demanded the sailing of the fleet.

A CHANGE OF PICTURE

(Public Opinion—January–June)

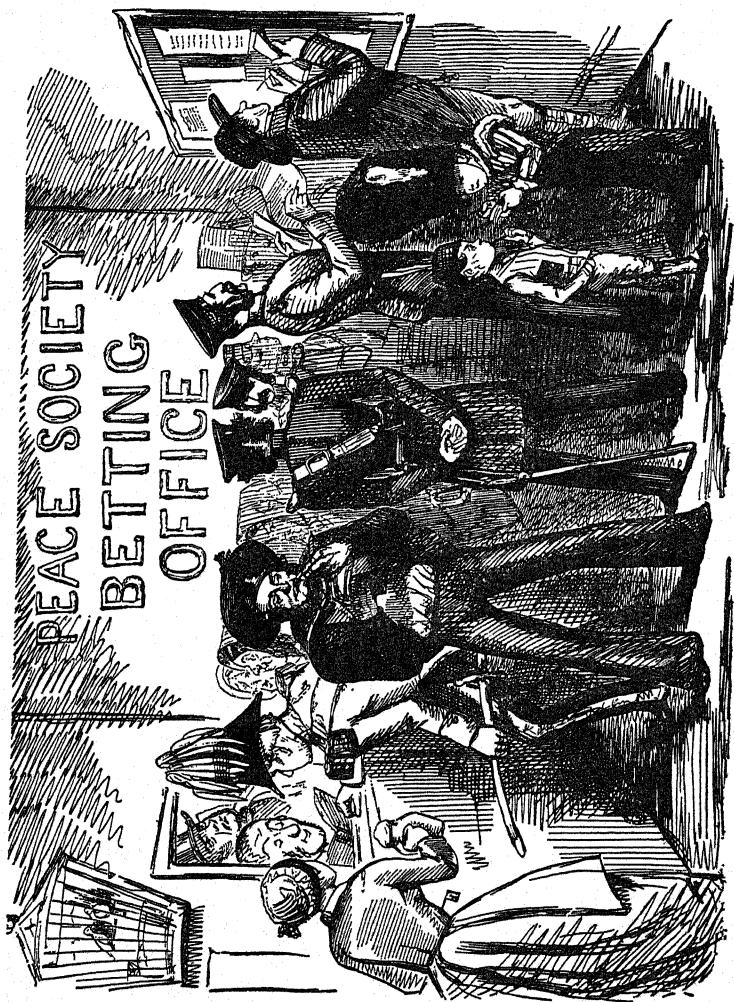
The agitation against Napoleon III, which had persisted without intermission since the *coup d’état*, was at its height in January 1853. The conviction that he was about to invade England was as strong as ever. It was rumoured that he intended first to descend upon the Channel Islands or possibly upon Belgium. *John Bull* foresaw an even worse danger. Louis Napoleon, ‘surrounded by parasites, pimps, and prostitutes’, might at any moment ‘invade England or Ireland, under the banner of the Pope, as the chosen champion of the “Catholic Faith”’. Did not the Government contain Catholics in its subordinate offices and those dangerously near to Catholicism in the highest positions? Was it not plain, asked an editorial, that Napoleon would be ‘able to obtain whatever information he

chose through the intervention of the Popish priesthood, whose tools—if not its hands, at least its eyes and its ears, are now installed in official situations?’ ‘Would not Mr. Gladstone combine with Monsell the Jesuit pervert, Keogh the Pope’s pioneer, in all which makes Popery abhorrent and Protestantism ridiculous?’¹

Other papers were scarcely less vehement. The *Morning Post*, true to its alliance, took up a solitary stand on behalf of the Emperor. Delane, too, though still distrustful of Napoleon’s intentions, had realized a few months before that the time for abuse of an established monarch and possible ally was past. ‘I think,’ he wrote, ‘that we have picked that bone pretty bare, and shall do ourselves, instead of him, injury if we continue to abuse him.’ In January, therefore, *The Times* complimented Napoleon on his marriage, and expressed the hope that the Empress Eugenie would find the throne of France more comfortable than ‘the last aspirer to her perilous position’.² But there were a few who thought that greater efforts should be made to allay the agitation. To patronize Napoleon was scarcely a sufficient remedy. At the beginning of the year, therefore, Cobden wrote that the object of the Peace Society should be ‘to beat down this most wicked spirit toward France’. He himself was composing a pacifist pamphlet, attempting to prove that the war of 1792 was provoked, not by France, but by England, and suggesting that the ‘invasion scare’ might again provoke France against her will. His argument was reinforced at a Peace Conference held in Edinburgh, and received wide but uniformly unflattering attention in the Press. The *Manchester Guardian*, among the most sober of his critics, spoke of ‘the hopeless task of convincing the people of England that they may make themselves perfectly easy as to the designs of the very unscrupulous gentleman whose iron will and inscrutable purposes

¹ Monsell and Keogh were Irish Catholics whom Aberdeen had given posts in order to please the Irish Tenant League. Keogh was Solicitor-General for Ireland.

² 21/1/53. Delane himself went to Paris to witness Napoleon’s marriage, but though ordering this change of policy he still believed Napoleon dangerous if only because of the popularity war would bring. Dasent, vol. I, pp. 147–54.



THE INVASION STAKES—LAYING THE ODDS.

Punch: 19 February 1853

wield the vast aggressive power of France, who has got an army of 400,000 men . . . and who is straining every nerve to accumulate a large force of powerful steamships which will enable him in a single night to transport forty or fifty thousand of these troops to the gates of Portsmouth or Sheerness'. The task did seem hopeless. The propaganda of the Peace Society apparently worked according to a 'law of reversed effort': the stronger their advocacy of peace, the more bitter was the hostility they aroused.

Suddenly there came a change. Was the leaven really working? 'Gallophobia,' declared *The Herald of Peace*, 'is passing.' England was returning to common sense, and one writer, after quoting the opinions of many great authorities, ranging from Montesquieu to the Duke of Wellington, found that Lord John Russell, in a moment of inspiration, had been nearest the truth. 'Opinions,' he had said, 'are stronger than armies.'

The change, however, was not due to the Peace Society. It was due to the Eastern Question. Napoleon had lost his character as the great enemy of European Liberalism, not because of any change of heart in England, but because the Tsar had taken his place. A new actor was playing the rôle and there was no room for an understudy.

This reversal was not quite so sudden as it seemed. The first step had been taken unconsciously. In February, followers of Mazzini had made an attempt upon Milan and a would-be assassin, no doubt a follower of somebody, had tried to kill the Emperor of Austria. The Austrian Government had complained that England's habit of harbouring refugees had made these attempts possible, and a rumour had spread that the Government was to be requested to surrender Mazzini and Kossuth. A debate in Parliament proved that the rumour was unfounded, and Lord Lyndhurst's speech established England's legal right to give sanctuary to all the revolutionaries of Europe, if she wished.

The importance of this incident lay in the fact that it recalled

the events of 1849. The Austrian Emperor, newspaper readers were reminded, had always been cruel and vindictive—this was but another proof of it. It was a good thing Lord Palmerston was still there to prevent the Government from faltering. He had been firm with Austria and Russia in 1849 and he would be again. On a matter like this, said the *Morning Post*, no amicable arrangement could ever be made with a tyranny such as Austria. *The Times* declared that since ‘we are a nation of refugees’, the Emperors had better put their own houses in order or they might themselves be soon seeking asylum in Britain.

The incident might have been forgotten had it not been that it was followed immediately by the announcement of Prince Menschikoff’s demands upon Turkey. So not only Austria but the Tsar had recommenced his old aggressions! And once again it was Turkey upon which the attack was being made! Where was Lord Palmerston?

This attitude was taken instinctively. The events of 1849 were once more vividly before the minds of newspaper readers. The complex problems which perplexed the Cabinet did not disturb the ordinary citizen. In his head was a picture of a past event; he thought he saw its repetition. On that occasion England’s destiny had been in the hands of his favourite statesman. Our intervention, he believed, had saved Turkey. Our action this time must be equally prompt and vigorous.

What then was our action to be? According to his picture of 1849, the right method of procedure when dealing with the Tsar was to dispatch a fleet against him immediately. The man in the street—or more probably in the Pall Mall club—read with wonder that this was what Louis Napoleon was doing and with shame that we were not acting with him. His judgment of Napoleon had clearly been mistaken: his worst fears of the Coalition Cabinet were confirmed. What excuse had our Government for its inaction? What did *The Times* say? That Turkey was a decaying and barbaric, as well as a pagan, empire? This was outrageous. If Turkey was weak then there

was all the more reason to aid her. Moreover, Palmerston himself had said that Turkey was reforming, and everyone knew that, with Lord Stratford at the Porte, Turkey was becoming tolerant and would soon be converted. No, these were the merest excuses. There could be no two opinions about it. Our fleet had not accompanied Napoleon's because Aberdeen, who was notoriously a friend of the Tsar, was in Russian pay, and Palmerston, decoyed away to the Home Office, was gagged and helpless.

Now this series of mental events is not imaginary. Every editorial writer, who had not direct inspiration from someone actually engaged in the negotiations, passed through some, if not every one, of these stages. It was a natural sequence of thought leading to an inevitable conclusion. There were two obstacles to overcome before the picture could be complete. The first was distrust of Napoleon. This proved easy to change into a compensating enthusiasm. The second—the evil record of Turkey—was a more difficult obstruction, and it was only after a prolonged struggle that zealously Protestant newspapers were able to put a note of confidence into their demand for a war on behalf of Islam.

There were, however, two papers which were, as we know, in constant communication with members of the Government—*The Times* with Clarendon, and the *Morning Post* with Palmerston. In both papers, therefore, we find a more complex view of the situation. The *Morning Post*, at the outset, found the question difficult, and began by complimenting the Tsar while expressing detestation of the policy of former Tsars. 'Hitherto the Emperor Nicholas has displayed an appreciation so profound and so just of his duties and the rights of other Powers that it may be hoped that he will not now depart from this policy of good sense and moderation.' It was at first confident that the affair would soon be settled, and continued for some time to consider the Emperor of Austria more dangerous than the Tsar. But after the first two months this disagreement with other papers ceased. It is true that the Government, which included

Palmerston, was not openly attacked. But Lord Palmerston, after all, though not unreservedly accepting the ignorant view of the outside world, agreed with the popular idea of what should be British policy. It is not, therefore, in any way surprising to find that the *Morning Post* was soon leading the demand for strong measures against Russia. The *Morning Chronicle*, too, though beginning in the cautious manner befitting an organ of the Peelites, soon joined in the popular cry. The editor's sympathies were with Lord Palmerston.

The Times, from the outset, adopted the attitude of Lord Aberdeen. On February 28th Delane had ‘a long chat with the Premier’ and ‘found him very strong against the Turks’. *The Times*, therefore, continued to insist that Turkey was breaking up and that the Tsar was right in looking after the Christians in a decaying pagan empire. We, too, would do well to consider beforehand the probable effects of its dissolution. For these distressed Christians it is deeply concerned: ‘We are bound by every consideration of humanity, civilization, and justice to trust that it may be the will of Providence to restore these provinces and their miserable inhabitants to a purer faith and a milder sway.’

When, towards the end of March, Napoleon dispatched the French fleet to the Dardanelles, Henry Reeve ‘at once saw . . . that the French had got into a scrape in which we should not follow them’. He was right: the Cabinet refused to co-operate with Napoleon and the fleet was kept in home waters. During the next two days, therefore (March 21st and 22nd), in the leading articles in *The Times* Reeve declared that ‘it must be borne in mind that the prime aggressor of which Turkey has to complain is France’,¹ that it was a ‘mockery to suppose that this country can be made a catspaw of the French Government’, and that it was England’s duty to abstain from any interference. He heard from Delane that Aberdeen entirely concurred in this position. These articles, however, so annoyed the French that

¹ There was something to be said for this view. The question of the Holy Places had been reopened in the preceding year in order to please French Catholics.

a few days later Lord Clarendon 'entreated' Reeve 'not to fall upon them'. He consequently wrote an article next day which he 'afterwards heard had, oddly enough, delighted both Russia and France'. For the next two months, *The Times* kept strictly to this attitude: that there was no reason to think that the Tsar meant 'to risk war upon such a question' and that England could aid in the negotiations only if she avoided hostile measures such as that taken by Napoleon.

Every other newspaper in the country took, as we have said, a different view of the situation. The occasion was seized as an opportunity for discrediting Aberdeen and destroying the great position of *The Times*. Facts had little to do with the formation of opinion.

Against the view that Turkey must soon break up the other papers protested; some of them with moderation at first and increasing violence; others with a violence at first which it was impossible afterwards to increase. Turkey, the *Morning Post* found to be, as Lord Palmerston said, a tolerant state, and although poorly governed at present, capable of improvement. The *Manchester Guardian* at first agreed that Turkey was weak, but found this a reason not for deserting her, but for continuing our protection. And there was another reason: 'Turkey is a source of supply for some of our most important imports.' The *Daily News* was especially interested in our valuable trade with the Porte: it declared that the Tsar's 'scandalous desire to despoil Turkey' would 'overhang the markets of Europe for some time to come'. Further, Constantinople itself was perhaps in danger; if Russia should succeed in reaching the Bosphorus, 'adieu to everything like freedom of faith, of speech, of printed thought, and of trade'.

The plea that the Balkan peoples, for whom we had fought against Turkey, would prefer the so-called Christian despotism of the Tsar to the generous and tolerant rule of the Sultan, was denounced as pro-Russian or -Austrian propaganda. The *Morning Herald* dubbed *The Times* 'our Hebrao-Austro-Russian contemporary', the *Daily News* referred to the 'Brunnow organ',

while *Bell's Life* called it the ‘London organ of Austria’. Finally, the *Morning Advertiser* declared that ‘*The Times* is right in stating that it is isolated in its advocacy of Russian interests . . . it is printed in the English language, but that is the only thing English about it. It is, where Russia is concerned, Russian all over.’

The Government was no less severely treated. Here, too, occurred the same remarkable confusion. Though neither the Emperor of Austria nor the Pope were in opposition to England at the moment, the events of the past years had left a settled conviction that, in a struggle for liberty, they must be on the wrong side. ‘Austrian’, ‘Russian’, and ‘Papal’ were therefore all interchangeable terms of abuse.

The *Morning Herald* pointed to the connection between the ‘funkeyism’ of *The Times* and the ‘senile hesitation’ of the Premier and Lord Clarendon who ‘had no objection to the Tsar taking Constantinople or anything else’. But, with deliberate care, Lord Palmerston, for whose secession the Derby Party were still hoping, was singled out for exoneration. ‘Of Lord Palmerston we wish to speak with respect; his position in the Cabinet is involuntary.’

Lord John, too, who had just made a strong Protestant speech about the Irish Church, was also considered at least honest. But as a whole the Government was denounced as pro-Papal. ‘Lord John,’ said the *Morning Post*, ‘has been snubbed . . . and his value in the eyes of his colleagues set below that of Messrs. Keogh and Monsell. The Noble Premier has come fully up to the expectations of his opponents. We expected an anti-English foreign policy and a Popish leaning in domestic matters and we have not been disappointed.’¹

Aberdeen was further accused of helping Russia now as he had done in 1829 and 1843, and it was thrown at him by way of abuse that he was the ‘author of Adrianople’. *Reynolds's Weekly* manifested a fine contempt for the whole ‘corrupt

¹ For the incident in which Lord John, Keogh, and Monsell all offered to resign, vide Greville, *A Journal of the Reign of Queen Victoria*, vol. VII, p. 68.

oligarchy', and hoped that Turkey, which so bravely supported the refugees in 1849, would not put its 'sole reliance on the respectable old gentlemen presiding over our affairs at Downing Street'. The chorus was completed when Disraeli entered the lists against the Premier and declared that: 'If war breaks out—and *the present prospect is that war will break out*—this dread calamity must be placed to the account of this man, and of this man alone.'

In abuse of *The Times* and the Premier whose policy it supported the remainder of the Press was now unanimous. There was almost equal agreement about the course of action England's honour demanded. Louis Napoleon's help would have to be accepted. Most of the papers, therefore, made a complete *volte-face* with as much grace as that operation will allow. The *Daily News*, one of his bitterest opponents, decided that we must co-operate with him in every way 'in spite of his crimes'. *Bell's Life* warned the Government that though it was England's duty to act with Napoleon, we must never for a moment trust in him. This attitude, however, did not last long. By June the French Emperor's firm policy was everywhere held up as a contrast to that of our Government. If our fleet accompanied Napoleon's, the Tsar would give way and war would become unnecessary. 'England and France are the two policemen of Europe,' said the *Press*, 'and they can always keep the peace.'

In June, as we have seen, the Cabinet gave way to this demand 'as the least measure which will satisfy public opinion'. But the Cabinet was chiefly concerned at this period in gaining Austrian and Prussian help in the negotiations. If the Four Powers were united, Clarendon believed that terms could be arranged. The important thing was to conciliate Austria and not to drive the Tsar into further follies. On June 4th, therefore, he wrote to Reeve explaining the situation and asking him to avoid giving the Tsar 'any just cause of irritation'. 'A disbelief in war would be the best tone, founded not alone upon the declared intentions of the Emperor to uphold the Turkish

Empire, but upon the pacific principles which he has adopted throughout his reign.’ Succeeding leading articles in *The Times* did follow this suggestion; while warning the Tsar that we were not to be intimidated, they declared that the British Government had been right in its moderation, since only the ‘joint action of Europe is the true sanction of Public Law and Peace’. Lord Clarendon wrote thanking Reeve for his ‘excellent article’ and continued to supply him with information concerning the one thing which could bring a peaceful solution—the unity of the Four Powers. ‘*The difficulty*,’ he wrote, ‘is finding a decent mode of backing out for the Emperor.’

Now to the Opposition papers the idea that Austria might be upon the side of the allies could not occur. Austria and Russia were one in villainy. The *Morning Post*, accepting Lord Palmerston’s view, had always been persistent in abuse of Francis Joseph and, until the middle of May, showed no signs of change. Then appeared an article, no doubt inspired by Palmerston, admitting that Austria, ‘in whose interests it was’, would perhaps aid in coercing the Tsar. But the *Morning Post* found it impossible seriously to entertain the probability of an Austrian alliance and confidently expected her treachery. In July, on the basis of an unfounded rumour from his friends in Paris, Mr. Borthwick declared that she had invaded Bosnia, and Reeve wrote: ‘There was a report in Paris that Austria is preparing to occupy Bosnia and Servia, but I have no news of it.’ There never was any news of it.

Other papers, not troubled by hints from Lord Palmerston, knew nothing of the desirability of the Austrian alliance. They assumed that Austria would help Russia, and the fact that, in this case, the allies could not reach Russian troops in the Principalities was not noticed. The diplomats indeed knew that Austria’s policy was the crux of the problem; to the public it seemed irrelevant.

So far the image of 1849 had suggested the sending of the fleet, but it had not made actual war seem probable. The newspapers had assumed, for the most part, that the Tsar would give

way. But before the end of June came the news that Gortschakoff had crossed the Pruth. War now seemed more likely. Apparently we had waited too long before sending the fleet to the Dardanelles. We must follow up this action by an immediate demand for the evacuation of the Principalities. It was clear that many journals and their readers found the prospect of the war less unpleasant than they cared to admit. The *Morning Chronicle*, declaring its earnest desire for peace, failed to disguise its satisfaction at the thought of the 'whole country rising to the occasion if Russian aggression continues'. The *Daily News*, on hearing of the Tsar's entrance of the Principalities, declared that the 'first blow has probably been struck by oppressive absolutism against the peace and liberty of Europe: and the great conflict of principles long since foreseen and foretold by the exile of St. Helena may be deemed to have at length begun'.

The *Morning Herald* went further. It refuted those who insisted that the fleet should not advance until some act of aggression had been committed by the assertion that 'the first act of aggression might be the seizure of Constantinople'. Readers unacquainted with the topography of the Near East no doubt accepted this as possible, and were not surprised to hear that Russia's entrance into the Principalities meant that '*the March on Constantinople has begun*'.

At this point even *The Times* began to grow uncertain. Its position as defender of the Government had become increasingly difficult, and an article replying to the charges against Aberdeen had but given its adversaries a further weapon. It was charged with trying to sow dissension between the English and the French, and, it must be admitted, offering its opponents many opportunities by its inconsistency. For Delane was in a difficulty. He still attempted to support the policy of the Premier. He declared that invasion of neutral territory as a guarantee, however culpable, did not necessitate war. Again a long and pacific 'leader' demanded how we could explain to the labourer in his village our objects in risking a war with Russia, and added that, if we went to war on behalf of Turkey,

we would be unable to reach Russia in the Principalities. ‘While Russia is doing something which cannot possibly be prevented we are to attempt something elsewhere with only a remote chance of success.’ At the same time, Henry Reeve, like Clarendon himself, was getting restive, and continually emphasized the danger of giving the Tsar so much time to settle his troops on Turkish soil. Delane, too, was beginning to favour a stronger policy; and it is hardly likely that he was entirely insensitive to the ceaseless attacks upon *The Times*. Greville noted the change:

‘*The Times* newspaper, always famous for its versatility and inconsistency, has lately produced articles on the Eastern Question, on the same day, of the most opposite characters, one warlike and firm, the next vehemently pacific, by some other hand. . . . This is of small importance, but it is indicative of the difference which exists in the Cabinet on the subject, and the explanation of the inconsistency of *The Times* is to be found in the double influence which acts on the paper. . . . When the two articles appeared in *The Times* to which I particularly allude, Clarendon approved of the first, and found great fault with the other, while Aberdeen wrote to Delane and expressed his strong approbation of the second.’ It was Delane’s policy to support the Cabinet, but what if the Cabinet were divided against itself?

During the first six months of 1853, a somewhat curious relationship had existed between Cabinet and public.

In the Cabinet itself there had been a difference of opinion between Palmerston and Aberdeen, but a joint policy had been arranged without great difficulty. The Premier had acquiesced in the dispatch of Lord Stratford to the Porte and had consented, against his better judgment, to send a fleet to the Dardanelles. But every member of the Cabinet agreed that any action against Russia must be taken in company, not only with Napoleon, but also with Austria and, if possible, Prussia. The Tsar’s demands were not totally unexpected or unwarranted: diplomacy

should easily adjust a matter which was only made difficult by Prince Menschikoff's arrogant behaviour and dangerous by the Tsar's precipitate action in crossing the Pruth. The problem was to gain the help of Austria and to find a formula which would guarantee Turkish sovereignty and satisfy such of the Russian demands as were just.

This, however, was not the problem of which the public was thinking. The revival of the Russian peril of 1849 had driven out the popular fear of Napoleon III. The Tsar seemed again attempting a policy of fraud to which the Premier was either blind or subservient. *The Times* was his accomplice. Turkey, defender of refugees in 1849, was likely to be overwhelmed. Opinion was still divided as to the character of this calamity. Turkey, after all, was not a Christian country, and her record, except for one bright incident, not reassuring. But there was a comfortable tendency to accept the view that she was rapidly reforming. At any rate her existence was essential to our prosperity. Austria, notoriously subservient to Russia, was certainly treacherous. Constantinople, too, might at any moment be seized and our Eastern trade, as well as our naval supremacy and national honour, destroyed. It was the duty of the public to insist on our fleet being sent to prevent the occurrence of this catastrophe.

The public insisted. Our fleet was sent. It was now clear that Lord Palmerston, whose views had been advocated by the *Morning Post*, could force the Cabinet to adopt a sound policy if sufficient weight of public opinion supported him in his lonely position.

The Vienna Note

THE CABINET

(July–October)

IN telling the story of a committee, one member of which became a party to decisions notoriously at variance with his principles, Mr. J. M. Keynes wrote: 'The President would be manœuvred off his ground, would miss the moment for digging his toes in, and, before he knew where he had been got to, it was too late.' Lord Aberdeen had begun a similar course of slipping and hesitating and slipping again. When, at the beginning of June, he had allowed the fleet to sail to the Dardanelles in order 'to satisfy public opinion', he had missed the first opportunity to dig his toes in. That he was partly conscious of this his letters show. In the very act of committing himself on behalf of Turkey, he wrote protesting against the suggestion that he was not perfectly free: 'The only hostile operation contemplated by the Cabinet has been the defence of Constantinople against a Russian attack. How far we may contract engagements with the Porte, in the event of actual war, and under what circumstances we should find ourselves justified in being finally committed against Russia, ought to be the subject of future deliberation. We are at present bound by no stipulations of treaty in this respect, and are free to adopt such a course as may appear most consistent with our real interests and honour.'

But this freedom was only theoretical. By the end of September Lord Aberdeen had again been manœuvred off his ground, and the Cabinet had become 'finally committed against Russia', whether they admitted it or not.

In July there seemed an excellent prospect of peace. Out of a

number of Notes suggested, one had been agreed upon by the Four Powers now in Council at Vienna. It was thought to remedy Russia's grievances without endangering the sovereignty of the Sultan. The fact that it originated with the Powers at Vienna and not with Napoleon or Stratford seemed to make its acceptance by the Tsar probable, and Lord Clarendon had great hopes of an early termination of his difficulties. Lord Palmerston, too, was now quite in accord with the rest of the Cabinet, and wrote to Clarendon expressing his satisfaction that the 'conduct of foreign relations is in such able hands as yours'.

On August 5th news came that the Tsar had accepted the Vienna Note. Most of the Cabinet thought the whole question at an end, though Clarendon was still doubtful. The Tsar had promised acceptance; but what if the Turks, to whom, perhaps regrettably, the Note had not been presented, should make difficulties? Lord Stratford, too, might 'raise obstacles instead of using all his influence to procure their agreement'. Clarendon, Greville reported, did not consider the Government 'out of the wood'.

For the moment all seemed well. The administration had successfully introduced a measure for the reorganization of the Government of India, and Mr. Gladstone had defended his Budget in a speech of extraordinary ability. If the Cabinet could now announce an amicable settlement between Turkey and Russia, their opponents, both in the House and in the Press, would be routed at every point. 'The Queen,' wrote Greville, 'is very smiling,' and the 'Government are in high spirits at the prospect of winding up their prosperous session with the settlement of the Eastern Question'.

This success, however, was denied them. Clarendon's fears had been only too well founded. The Turks accepted the Note only on condition that certain modifications were introduced. Unable, therefore, to quiet their critics by a simple announcement of a peaceful settlement, the Government found it necessary to defend their policy. Everything depended upon

Lord Palmerston. If his support of Clarendon's course should be wholehearted, Tory and Cobdenite critics alike would be ineffective.

In the early stages of the debate Clarendon and Lord John were severely handled by Tory opponents, and their replies were 'tame, meagre, and unsatisfactory'. Then Cobden spoke. He declared that the 'independence of the Turkish Empire was an empty phrase', and, perhaps a little tactlessly, reminded the House that, unlike his opponents, he had studied Turkish administration on the spot and did not take facts on hearsay. Neither did he confine himself to the Eastern Question: he dealt also with war in general. 'The Government,' he added, 'have done wisely in not listening to the cry of the newspapers, some of which profess democratic principles, as if democracy ever gained anything by war.'

Lord Palmerston was roused and the Government was safe. He 'fell upon Cobden with great vigour and success'. Cobden's facts failed to interest him. 'I assert without fear of contradiction from anyone who knows anything about it,' he said, 'that so far from having gone back, Turkey has made greater progress and improvement than any other country in the same period.' As for Cobden's trade statistics he brushed them aside. Why did England go to war in the past? 'Why, sir, we went to war for the liberties of Europe and not for the purpose of gaining so much per cent on our exports.' Criticism was over. Like newspaper editors, Members of Parliament approved if Palmerston was satisfied. Mr. Danby Seymour expressed the prevailing sentiment when he declared that he was 'glad that the Ministry contained a nobleman of proper English spirit, who, he was certain, would not consent to remain a member of any administration unless a policy were followed conducive to the honour of the country.'

Parliament was adjourned and the Government had only the newspapers to face. 'We shall now be able,' wrote Sir James Graham, 'to act without interrogatories administered in Parliament and without speeches calculated to mislead the Turk into

false confidence that he will be supported in resistance to reasonable demands. This delusion may lead him into a pit-fall.' Clarendon agreed that 'the Turks seem to be getting more stupid and obstinate every day', and that the difficulty now lay in getting them to agree to any terms which the Tsar could be expected to accept.

For Turkey had now become the great obstacle to peace: the Tsar was merely looking for 'some mode of backing down'. News of the warlike spirit at Constantinople continually arrived. 'The conduct of the Porte,' wrote Aberdeen, 'is suicidal. It can only be explained by a desire that the affair shall end in war.' Lord Clarendon agreed with him and believed that Lord Stratford was encouraging the warlike spirit at the Porte.

'I have all along felt that Stratford would allow no plan of settlement to succeed which did not originate with himself,' wrote Clarendon to Lord John, and Lord Cowley who had received an account from De la Cour at Constantinople fully confirmed his impression. 'Publicly, and officially, Lord Stratford has obeyed instructions and called upon the Ottoman Government to accept the Vienna Note: but he lets it be seen that his private opinion is at variance with his official language. De la Cour asserts further that to his *intimes*, Lord Stratford uses the most violent language, that he disapproves all the proceedings at Vienna, declares that war was preferable to such a conclusion. Then he goes on to say that they shall know his name is Canning, that he will resign, that he knows that the Government is not united on this question, and that a change must take place there which will bring into power the friends and supporters of his policy in Turkey.' Sir James Graham was equally sure that Stratford was the obstacle. On September 3rd he wrote that Europe must not 'be involved in war because Canning is resolved to embroil matters at home and abroad in the hope of attaining a triumph for his own morbid vanity and implacable antipathies'.

If these were the opinions expressed by Cabinet Ministers,

why was not Lord Stratford recalled? It was the critical moment for Aberdeen. Now or never must he dig his toes in. But to recall Stratford was no easy matter. Lord Cowley had reported that Stratford had threatened to resign and destroy the Government. If so, it was no idle boast. His hold on the Press, the natural popularity of his strong anti-Russian policy, and, above all, his friendship with Lord Palmerston, would have made his recall or resignation fatal to the Ministry. Nevertheless, Aberdeen seems to have made up his mind and, on August 20th, actually wrote to the Queen to prepare her for Stratford's resignation. Sir James Graham was in hearty agreement. 'You should be ready to supersede him without the loss of a day,' he wrote, 'and to send either Bulwer or Howden, to give effect on the spot to the fixed purpose of the allies.'¹ Clarendon, however, though admitting that Stratford was 'very warlike, and rejoiced in the state of preparedness in which the Porte has put itself', said that 'there was no official evidence that he had failed in doing his duty fairly by his own Government: therefore it would be out of the question to recall him'. 'He has never,' he wrote, 'entered sincerely into the views of the Government, and has been making political capital for himself. However, there he is and we must make the best of him.'

While Aberdeen was hesitating an event occurred which rendered it impossible to recall Stratford or to insist upon the Turks accepting the Vienna Note. A dispatch from Nesselrode appeared in a Berlin paper which made it clear that the interpretation placed upon the modified clauses by Russia was not

¹ The question of Stratford's recall arose again in November. The Queen suggested it and Aberdeen replied that: 'He could not answer for the effect it might produce in the country, and in the Government.' *Correspondence*, 28/11/53. It is worth noting the attitude of our other ambassadors. Sir George Seymour at St. Petersburg had ceased to anticipate a peaceful settlement with pleasure. On August 18th he wrote: 'The Russians are great rogues and the Emperor worthy of being at the head of such a people. . . . I am ashamed to say that it will be almost painful to me if the thing is patched up without the Russian having been taught that Cronstadt and Sevastopol never were dropped in the Styx, whatever the rest of the Empire may have been. They sadly want a lesson and I should have been glad if they had got it before their fleet is better manned.' Parker, Vol. II, p. 223. As for Westmorland at Vienna, Clarendon suggested to Aberdeen on October 10th that they should 'send someone as coadjutor to our faithful but feeble Westmorland'.

that originally intended by the allies. The Press, which had lately become more reconciled to a diplomatic settlement, burst forth again into furious wrath with Russia. The effect on Palmerston and Russell seems to have been similar. Palmerston took no trouble to conceal his belief that the existence of the Government depended on him and showed that he would be no party to coercing Turkey. He was apt to speak of war with Russia in a nonchalant, jaunty manner which terrified some of his colleagues.

Lord John was disappointed at not taking Aberdeen's place at the head of affairs, and had become somewhat restive and unreliable.¹ At first he had seemed to agree with Aberdeen that the acceptance of the Note should be the condition of our help to Turkey. Immediately afterwards he wrote to the contrary effect. On several occasions he threatened to break up the Ministry by resigning. On September 17th he wrote to Clarendon warning him that if pressure was put upon the Turks he should probably 'decline any responsibility for it'. On the 27th he became more emphatic. 'As to the question of war for us, I had already considered all the evils you mention, and they are only to be encountered *if our honour is at stake*. I know something of the English people, and feel sure that they would fight to the stumps for the honour of England. To have held out such encouragement to the Turks as we have done and afterwards to desert them, would be felt as deep disgrace and humiliation by the whole country.'²

Other members of the Cabinet agreed that Nesselrode's dispatch had killed the Vienna Note. Lord Clarendon wrote: 'We cannot press the Turks too hard about the Note because public

¹ Aberdeen had told Russell that he would resign in his favour at the first opportunity. The opportunity did not arrive, not because of unwillingness on Aberdeen's part, but because Russell could not form a Cabinet. Sir. James Graham at Balmoral wrote to Aberdeen: 'The Queen intimated to me that if Peel's friends remained united Lord John must see the impossibility of power passing into the hands of an exclusive Whig Party. "The silent members of the Cabinet" have hitherto been with you. . . . The reunion of Lord John and Palmerston is certainly formidable, but much will depend on the Righteousness of the Cause, and on the Purity of Motives and Conduct.'

² Cp. this with Lord John's assertion in his *Recollections*, that he would have 'insisted on making Turkey accept the Vienna Note if he had been Prime Minister'.

opinion would be against it, and secondly, because they would fight it out single-handed.' Prince Albert and the Queen, who had been in favour of peremptory dealing with the Porte, now changed their minds about the Tsar's intentions and felt that a new start must be made. The view of the peace party in the Cabinet was summed up by Sidney Herbert when he wrote that 'the Note has now been so blown upon and each party so committed against it, that it is hopeless to press it further'.

The Vienna Note was abandoned. At the same time a further step was taken which made future negotiations more difficult. In Constantinople enthusiasm for war had led to riots in which 'the lives and property of British subjects were in danger'. Moreover, storms in Besika Bay made it necessary to remove the fleet to some other harbour, and the state of public opinion made its withdrawal impossible. On September 23rd, a dispatch was sent to Stratford ordering him to summon the fleet to the Bosphorus in defiance of the treaty of 1841, which closed the Straits to all ships-of-war except those of Turkey. Less than a fortnight before, Aberdeen had written to the Queen: 'It would be an act of gross inconsistency to enter the Dardanelles and to violate a treaty at the very moment that Russia had complied with the demands made by the Four Powers who were parties to that engagement.' Yet the advance was made. It roused bitter hostility in Russia and irretrievably committed England to Turkey's support.

Lord Aberdeen had again given way, and, as usual, the *Press* was careful to call attention to his surrender. A revised verse from Thomas Hood served as an 'epitaph' for the week.

Speak of him tenderly,
Gently and humanly,
All that is left of him
Now is pure womanly.¹

¹ 10/9/53. 'Epitaph on Lord Aberdeen from Hood's "Bridge of Sighs"'. On the same date appears the following:

'A CARD PARTY AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE

ABERDEEN: Shuffle, Clarendon.

CLARENDON: You are always making me shuffle. It's Palmerston's lead.

THE PUBLIC

(July–October)

During July and August the attack on the Government and abuse of *The Times* never ceased. But there were considerable fluctuations of opinion as to the necessity of war. At the beginning of July the news that Russian troops had crossed the Pruth had, as we have seen, produced a sentiment in favour of immediate hostilities, except in those papers which received Government inspiration. Even *The Times* had become doubtful. But when it was realized that our fleet had at length moved out to join the French one, and that a Note had been sent to Russia, there was again a tendency to expect the Tsar to give way.

At the beginning of August came another fluctuation. The Government, when asked for information in the Commons, seemed unwilling to give it, and an unlucky speech by Clarendon in the House of Lords suggested that war was probable. For a few days there was 'a great fall of funds and the depreciation of every sort of security'. 'Everybody,' wrote Greville, 'became persuaded that war was inevitable.'

Into the midst of this panic came the announcement that the Tsar had accepted the Vienna Note. It was now impossible to continue a belief in war. Russia apparently had given way. We had successfully repeated 1849. *The Times* erroneously considered the matter at an end and even reported that: 'The Sultan has gratefully acceded to the terms recommended by

PALMERSTON: I wish it was.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL: I've followed your lead, Palmerston.

PALMERSTON: And won the trick. It's a way people have who do as I bid them. If somebody I know had trumped Menschikoff's ultimatum with Dundas's Broadside, as I advised, we four should not be sitting in a back office in the first week of September instead of shooting partridges. However, we won't talk of that, or the Premier will go revoking to the damage of Clarendon's peace of mind.

ABERDEEN: I wish ye'd just play. Dinna talk so much.

PALMERSTON: You never see me put out.

ABERDEEN (spitefully): Not since Christmas twelvemonth.

PALMERSTON (laughing): Very good, very good indeed. Who says the old gentleman's memory is failing? Christmas had a February after it, hadn't it, Russell?

RUSSELL: Never mind. You played the deuce?

PALMERSTON: I did, though I ought not to say so.'

the Conference of Vienna and it is understood that the Principalities will speedily be evacuated.' The *Morning Post* announced that 'the Eastern Question is settled', and the *Morning Chronicle* concurred. The *Manchester Guardian* found the settlement a triumph for principle of joint action by the Powers. Turkey, of course, would assent at once to terms arranged for her by the allies. The *Herald of Peace* was jubilant. 'We presume,' it wrote, 'that we may now say that all danger of a war in the East is at an end.' Other papers were less easy to satisfy. They had been sure that the Tsar would not accept. It was difficult to feel elated that the war, so confidently anticipated, would not after all occur. Some editors thought that there could be only one explanation of Russia's willingness—our Government, known to be Russian in sympathy, had offered the Tsar terms which humiliated Turkey. What were the terms? No one knew exactly, but a question by Clanricarde in the House of Lords on August 12th provided the clue. The terms did not include a demand for immediate evacuation of the Principalities.¹ Clarendon was apparently trusting in the 'good faith of the Tsar' to evacuate after the conclusion of preliminary terms. Was there ever clearer proof of Russian intrigue in a Cabinet? The fact that such a demand would necessarily have meant war was realized by diplomats but not by newspaper editors.

The *Daily News*, therefore, denounced the terms; they were merely offered in order to give Russia time to complete the careful duplicity which had characterized her policy for centuries. The Spithead naval review, intended by the Government to reassure the public, was, the *Daily News* declared, only a method of diverting the public from insisting that the Navy be put to its proper use.² The military camp at Chobham was also mere display arranged to avoid honest aid to Turkey. No terms could be honest which left the Tsar in possession of the

¹ Clarendon agreed that the evacuation of the Principalities was 'a *sine qua non* of any agreement whatever', but admitted that evacuation was expected to follow, not precede, a settlement.

² The *Punch* cartoon on page 131 probably illustrates its effects on the spectators with fair accuracy.

Principalities. *Bell's Life* declared that its 'blood tingled' that Palmerston should be a party to terms which were an outrage upon our national honour. The *Morning Herald* was almost equally explicit, and *John Bull* believed that the Vienna Note was a subtle method of destroying the Sultan's sovereignty.

Most violent of all was the *Morning Advertiser*. On August 10th the first number of a series of articles by Mr. David Urquhart appeared in its columns. Seldom have Cabinet, country, or newspapers been so belaboured as were the Aberdeen Government, Russia, and *The Times*. That they were all in collusion was taken for granted. Aberdeen's 'conscience is for his office, his religion for the Tsar'. 'What rewards,' Urquhart asked, 'does *The Times* receive from Russia?' 'The Russian organ of Printing House Square yesterday returned to its vomit', 'but it is rather too much for an English journal to profit both by Russian gold and English credit'. As for the Tsar, *Reynolds's Weekly*, in calling him 'this fiend in human form', was under-stating the case.

Day by day Russian history was laid bare. The Tsar, Mr. Urquhart said, was playing the old game of Russian diplomacy. By bribing foreign statesmen, by specious displays of force, fraudulent intrigue, and opportune burglaries, Russia was for ever adding to its territory. For this purpose war was never necessary, since there were always English statesmen venal enough to accept gold when the Tsar wished further to eviscerate the Ottoman Empire. The whole Aberdeen Cabinet was in Russian pay. Clarendon, who seemed strongly opposed to the Tsar, was only shamming. On one occasion, for instance, he spoke of the Tsar's statements being 'grossly inaccurate'. 'Well,' asked Mr. Urquhart, 'if he said so much while Russian money clinked in his pockets, what would he have said if he had been honest?' Worst of all, there was Lord Palmerston: he had always really been under the influence of Russia, though his way of helping her by an appearance of hostility was subtle and sometimes hard to detect.

If Russia, then, was the European Mephistopheles, what of Turkey? In Mr. Urquhart's articles she had become an earthly



THE SHAM FIGHT AT SPITHEAD.

Boarder. "AH! IT'S ALL WERRY WELL; BUT O, JACK—IF YOU HAD BEEN A ROOSHIAN!"

Punch: 20 August 1853

paradise. She was a nation ideally tolerant and enlightened. The Christians under her rule were not, as so often asserted by agents of the Tsar, of the same faith as the Russians, and would always prefer Turkish tolerance to Russian protection. On matters of trade she was as advanced as Cobden himself, while the loss of her corn, if the Tsar seized Constantinople, would mean starvation for England. In the past there had been certain evils in Turkey, but now she had reformed: 'blood-thirstiness, anarchy, financial dilapidation, military disorganization, and political disruption', all, he declared, were completely eradicated. As for military force, Turkey was far stronger than Russia. 'There is not one European Power,' Mr. Urquhart added, 'that is not a match for Russia in strength when she is the aggressor: but there is not one that is a match for her in intelligence.'

Turkey, then, was stronger than Russia, and all the negotiations were fraudulent. Conferences were merely Russian contrivances to gain the aid of English and French politicians in destroying Turkey. If left alone, Turkey would easily turn Gortschakoff out of the Principalities and the Tsar would return to the Kremlin to wait for the next opportunity of descending upon the free subjects of the Sultan. *The Times*, he said, continually repeated a 'liturgy'; 'the Christian subjects of the Porte require and deserve protection . . . and his [the Tsar's] four Archangels in Downing Street respond Amen!' In fact the diplomatic conflict was only a semblance—a collusive action in which England was prosecuting Russia by arrangement, so that Turkey might be despoiled with all the forms of legality.

During August and September, however, Mr. Urquhart's was a lonely voice. No one else believed in Lord Palmerston's guilt and few thought it possible that our aid to Turkey was really a method of helping the Tsar. Moreover, with the adjournment of Parliament in the middle of August interest in the Eastern Question grew less. Most papers believed that the matter would now be peacefully settled. The bright hope of a glorious war was tarnished by the dust of diplomacy.

At the beginning of August came the news that Turkey wished for modifications in the Vienna Note, a fortnight later that the Tsar had refused to accept them.

The *Morning Post* was frankly tired of the subject. Russia, by her original acceptance of the Note, had shown that she would give way; with Lord Palmerston in the Cabinet the terms arranged would be honourable, and modifications and counter-proposals were in the nature of diplomacy. The *Globe* declared that both Russia and Turkey had the right to modify the terms and saw no reason why peace should not be made. The *Morning Herald* wavered for a moment, but decided that since the Tsar had shown signs of surrender, our united demand might induce him to withdraw from the Principalities without actual hostilities.

The Times went further than this. Delane knew that the Cabinet now found Turkey less tractable than Russia. He agreed with Aberdeen in wishing to force Turkey to accept the Vienna Note. But the dispatches he received from Constantinople were becoming increasingly difficult to use as the basis of pacific 'leaders'. He therefore wrote to his Eastern correspondent informing him that it would be impossible to retain his services if he persisted in taking a line so diametrically opposed to the interests of this country. 'You seem to imagine,' he went on, 'that England can desire nothing better than to sacrifice all its greatest interests and its most cherished objects to support barbarism against civilization, the Moslem against the Christian, slavery against liberty, to exchange peace for war—all to oblige the Turk . . . when no amount of protection can preserve his boasted "independence and integrity" . . . I trust, therefore, that in future you will have the modesty to forbear from offhand censures of English policy, to devote your whole attention to collecting and truly describing the facts, and, if you must give opinions, to take care that they are not Turkish but English.'¹

¹ On September 13th Henry Reeve left England to visit Constantinople. He reached Constantinople on October 3rd, paid several visits to Stratford, and returning through Vienna reached London on November 5th. *The Times* leaders were therefore left to Woodham (a Fellow of Jesus College), 'though,' Delane complained, 'there was, of course, a waste of time in having to send to Cambridge'.

The attitude of *The Times*, therefore, was that though Turkey had a right to modify the Note offered her she could not expect England's support if she would not accept terms agreed upon by the Four Powers. The *Morning Post*, for a brief period, took the same position. Mr. Borthwick knew that Lord Palmerston had agreed to the Vienna Note and argued that it must, therefore, contain a just settlement for Turkey.

The suggestion that Britain might, under any circumstances, desert Turkey was indignantly denounced by other papers. The *Morning Chronicle*, already a lukewarm partisan of the Government, from this time onward joined the ranks of the Opposition. It declared that 'public feeling has seldom been so deeply outraged as by the cynical declarations which have been published that a few verbal corrections introduced by the Turkish Minister into a document, which was professed to emanate from himself, constituted a sufficient ground for leaving an ancient ally to the mercy of an unscrupulous invader'.

A week later came the announcement of Count Nesselrode's dispatch. Probably this unlucky document was no more than an example of a customary usage of diplomats. Nesselrode was interpreting the vague clauses of a treaty in a way favourable to Russian interests. But its effect on English opinion was immense.

It was at once felt that England had been tricked and humiliated. Turkey had clearly been right in refusing our terms. Mr. Urquhart's charges of collusion became less difficult to believe. Moreover, he had himself apparently decided that, for the moment, Palmerston was to be trusted. It was true, Mr. Urquhart said, that he had betrayed Europe to Russia on many former occasions, but since his quarrel with the Crown in 1851 a change had set in. 'The man who can over-reach his own sovereign is surely qualified to put down that of Russia,' he declared. Other papers agreed with him that now Palmerston alone was to be trusted. The *Morning Post* repented of its former doubts and found that Turkey had done well in rejecting the Note. The fleet was about to pass the Dardanelles. This was, of

course, due to Palmerston's pressure in the Cabinet. The *Morning Chronicle*, though regretting the heat of opinion in Turkey, reminded the country that, where religious liberty was at stake, excitement was inevitable, and agreed with the *Globe* in praising Turkey for its rejection of the vague clauses of the Vienna Note. If there were to be more negotiations an entirely fresh start must be made.

The *Manchester Guardian* was glad that our fleet was to go to Turkey's help at once and, though not despairing of peace, it considered that a naval war with Russia to aid Turkey would be no great disaster. The *Daily News* felt that British honour was at stake, and asked if Aberdeen was merely stupid or whether he was a 'willing dupe'. 'Why,' it demanded, 'is the fleet to pass the Dardanelles?' If the Cabinet hoped in this way to lull public opinion into a false security it miscalculated. The fleets were only going up to Constantinople in order to 'force Turkey to humiliate herself'! The public, if not the Government, must rally to the aid of the Porte. For the first time there was complete unity in the Press. Even *The Times* admitted that Turkey had, after all, been justified in rejecting the Note. Delane, however, betrayed the influence of Clarendon when he added that action against Russia must be taken only by the Four Powers, and regretted that Austria showed signs of retreating. In this *The Times* stood alone. With other newspapers the associations of years of antipathy to Austria still remained. It was believed that if Austria entered the lists at all, it would be in behalf of Russia.¹

¹ An incident which occurred at the end of September, though not in itself connected either with Austria or the Eastern Question, revived the dislike of Austria and demonstrated the popular belief in her complicity in the tyranny of the Tsar. On September 25th it was announced that a certain Miss Cunningham had been arrested in Tuscany for distributing Protestant literature. The story recalled Gladstone's exposure of Neapolitan prisons and treatment of rebels by Austrian generals in 1849. Many newspapers were, therefore, extremely indignant with 'Papal and Austrian tyranny'. Cp. *Morning Post*, *Times*, *Globe*, and *Daily News*, September 26th to 28th. The *Daily News*, 26th, in an 'imaginary conversation', shows a recollection of Palmerston's *Civis Romanus sum* speech, comparing Miss Cunningham to St. Paul pleading Roman citizenship. The *Morning Chronicle* took an unusual and lofty view of the situation, 27/9/53. It wrote: 'It would have exceeded the ingenuity of anyone but a Tuscan official to commit such a combination of unprofitable outrages on our most cherished prejudices. To imprison a

It was no longer only in the newspapers that Austria and Russia were denounced. For the first time large and enthusiastic public meetings were called upon the Eastern Question. That the Vienna Note should be withdrawn; that Turkey, which was everywhere loudly cheered, should be aided, not merely by the presence of our fleet, but by its active participation against Russia; that our full support should be given to Louis Napoleon, whose name was now received with enthusiasm: these were resolutions passed in many parts of the country and reported in full in the daily papers. It was in view of this unanimity of public sentiment that the Cabinet reluctantly abandoned the Vienna Note instead of attempting to use it as a basis for further negotiation.

At the beginning of October, therefore, the negotiations stood exactly where they had in June. The problem was still to find a formula. There was no new point in dispute, no alteration in the demands of either party. The Tsar, the Austrian Government, and the English Cabinet were all still sincerely anxious for peace. But though the diplomatic situation was unchanged, the difficulty of obtaining peace was immensely enhanced.

The Tsar had crossed the Pruth into neutral country and only very favourable terms would enable him to withdraw without humiliation. The British fleet had made its way up to Constantinople, in spite of treaty agreements. England was thus committed on behalf of Turkey which, taking full advantage of this opportunity of English and French help, openly professed a desire for war with Russia. Lastly, English public opinion was indisputably warlike. The vicissitudes of the last six months had left their mark. In June and July, Russian aggression had

British subject, and that British subject a lady, and that lady one of the preferred race of Scots, and that Scotch gentlewoman a true blue Presbyterian . . . a lineal descendant of John Knox in a Tuscan *ergastulo causa religionis*. . . . To complete her religious martyrdom Miss Cunningham is in prison for circulating *The Pilgrim's Progress*! A young Scottish lady of gentle birth, a Presbyterian, a descendant of John Knox in an Italian dungeon, damp and dirty, and living on mouldy bread and putrid water—all for the sake of Bunyan's immortal and, to our minds, most tedious allegory.' 'But Hood,' the *Morning Chronicle* added, 'was right when he said:

"People who hold such absolute opinions,
Should stay at home in Protestant dominions."'

seemed palpable and the Government feeble and vacillating, if not actually treacherous. Then came a change. Russia had, as it seemed, weakly accepted our terms in response to pressure brought upon her through the efforts of Lord Palmerston and the public. Then came the news that Turkey wished to modify our terms. Some thought Turkey a little exacting and became less enthusiastic in their support. Russia then refused the modifications and accidentally revealed that she had intended to interpret that Note to her own advantage. At once it was believed that Turkey had been right in her refusal and that our Government had been a party to dishonest terms. Apparently the extremists who had charged their Government with being in Russian pay were right after all. Was Russia outwitting us? Could not the British public find anyone whom they could trust? 'Could not,' asked one paper, 'a single honest peer be found to inform the Queen of the danger to English honour?' Public meetings all over England answered that there was one man to whom the national honour could be safely entrusted—Lord Palmerston.

The Completion of the Picture

October 1853–January 1854

THE OLMÜTZ OVERTURE AND THE STRATFORD NOTE

(Cabinet—October–December)

At the beginning of October the newspapers and the Foreign Office saw the situation from exactly opposite points of view. With the now doubtful exception of *The Times*, the former considered that Turkey had been long-suffering under ill usage, and that Russia was merely gaining time by negotiations to make her position in the Principalities the more secure. Clarendon, on the other hand, knew from the Tsar's offer at Olmütz that, however reckless he had been in the past, he was now anxious to find a possible method of retreat; while the Turks, relying on the fact that the allies were committed to their support, were now wildly enthusiastic for war.

At Olmütz the Tsar had offered, while keeping the form of the Vienna Note, to disclaim the interpretation made infamous by Nesselrode's dispatch. The moment, therefore, seemed propitious for a fresh start on the basis of this concession. Unfortunately the Sultan chose this moment for delivering an ultimatum to Russia, demanding an evacuation of the Principalities within fifteen days on pain of a declaration of war. Clarendon, who had written to Stratford asking him to exert his influence to prevent the Sultan precipitating hostilities, heard of Turkey's action with the utmost disgust.¹ The news arrived on

¹ Stratford had formally protested against the declaration of war, but had refused to exert his personal influence to prevent a step of which he undoubtedly approved. Clarendon wrote: 'It is quite clear that the Turks don't want a settlement. The titular Sultan is for peace, but the real Sultan [Stratford] thinks that now or never is the time for putting an end to Russia. I am afraid there is trouble in store for us.'

October 5th and he immediately wrote to Sidney Herbert pointing out that the peaceful overture of the Tsar must now necessarily be disregarded. 'Things get worse and worse,' he wrote. 'The beastly Turks have actually declared war: so there is an end of the Olmütz arrangement, out of which something might possibly have been made; but it's all over now'; and Sidney Herbert replied: 'That the Turkish declaration of war greatly aggravates our difficulties, no one can deny. It does not destroy the possibility but it greatly lessens the probability of peace.'

On October 5th, Clarendon wrote again, summing up the situation. As usual the real difficulty was public opinion.

'The public seems to think that there is nothing to do but to declare war against Russia, just when she is yielding the point in dispute, and back the Turk, just when he acts contrary to our advice; and thus, without any guarantee on our part obliging us so to act, and without any English or European interest at stake, if the question of the Note be adjusted, as I think it would be, or rather would have been if the Turks could have been kept quiet. I believe they expect to take Petersburg before Christmas!'

On October 7th, the Cabinet reassembled after an interval of six weeks. Lord Palmerston wished to support the Turkish declaration of war by sending the fleet into the Black Sea and suggested that the Russian admiral at Sevastopol should be informed that 'any Russian ship-of-war found cruising in the Black Sea would be detained and be given over to the Turkish Government'. Clarendon moved and carried a more moderate proposal. Stratford was ordered to summon the fleets into the Black Sea for 'strictly defensive' purposes in the event of an actual declaration of war by Turkey.¹

Of this meeting of the Cabinet Aberdeen wrote that the 'aspect of the Cabinet was, on the whole, very good. Gladstone active and energetic for peace: Argyll, Herbert, Charles Wood,

¹ Aberdeen again agreed to this with some reluctance. In a letter to Sir J. Graham next day (October 8th) he explained that since no attack on Turkish territory was likely to be made by the Tsar, our fleet would not be involved.



WHAT EVERYBODY THINKS.

Young Palmerston,
a sharp clever boy.

"OH, CRIKEY! WHAT A SCOTCH MULL OF A PRIME MINISTER!"

[THAT MAY BE, BUT IT IS NOT PRETTY TO SAY SO.—*Punch.*]

and Granville all in the same sense. Newcastle not quite so much so: Lansdowne not so warlike as formerly; Palmerston urged his views perseveringly but not disagreeably. The Chancellor said little, but was evidently peaceful. Molesworth was not present, some mistake having been made in sending him notice.'

The Cabinet, then, was not as yet divided into parties, and on the 9th the Cabinet meeting, said Clarendon, was 'almost harmonious'; Palmerston being 'less cocky', and Aberdeen 'less timid'.

This harmony, however, became increasingly difficult to maintain. Lord Palmerston was convinced that England must necessarily be involved in the Turkish war with Russia. 'We passed the Rubicon,' he wrote a little later, 'when we first took part with Turkey and sent our squadrons to her support.' Lord Lansdowne, the Duke of Newcastle, and Sir William Molesworth, though less convinced of the necessity of war, were substantially in agreement. Lord John was still in a difficult mood. He now urged that Parliament should be summoned early in November. To the Peelites this seemed a declaration of open warfare. A majority of the Commons would support the Whig leaders: it would certainly demand hostilities with Russia and negotiations would be at an end. Speaking of this proposal, Sir James Graham wrote to Aberdeen: 'The trenches are opened and you must be on your guard! This from the Leader of the House is a formidable move.' Parliament, however, was not summoned and on October 14th the Cabinet again dispersed for a fortnight. Discussion continued by letter, and those members of the Cabinet who were in London met with frequency.

There was now under consideration a Note drafted by Lord Stratford. Among other points in its favour it was believed that Lord Stratford would hardly recommend the Porte to refuse his own suggestions. Lord Aberdeen, who regretted that the Olmütz overture had been neglected, was now determined that this new proposal should lay down our final terms and that we

should inform Turkey that their refusal would mean the end of our support. Believing that the terms offered all that Turkey could justly require, he urged that Turkey should be informed that:

'The Four Powers would not permit themselves, in consequence of unfounded objections, or by the declaration of war, which they have already condemned, to be drawn into a policy inconsistent with the peace of Europe, as well as with the true interests of Turkey itself.'

This proposal he made to all the important members of the Cabinet. He wrote to Mr. Gladstone:

'I believe we are now arrived at the last step it may be possible for us to take. . . . The Turks, with all their barbarism, are cunning enough, and see clearly the advantages of their situation. Step by step they have drawn us into a position in which we are more or less committed to their support. . . . I have thought it necessary to propose such an addition to the declaration of the Four Powers as is contained in the enclosed paper. It seems to me perfectly reasonable and just, considering our relations to the State on whose behalf we are attempting to mediate, and as offering the only chance of inducing the Turks to listen to pacific advice. . . . My own opinion is that it can only be objected to by those who really wish to make peace impossible.'

It seemed that Lord Aberdeen had found the place to dig his toes in. Mr. Gladstone in reply agreed that some such final statement of the limit of our aid was 'indispensable'. Two days later, however, he received a letter from the Prime Minister stating that he had decided not to press the clause which had been pronounced 'indispensable'. 'I found,' Aberdeen wrote, 'both Palmerston and Lord John were determined to resist it to the utmost extremity, and I had to consider how far I should be justified in creating a breach on such a ground.' In the place of this clause he persuaded his colleagues to demand from the Turks a suspension of hostilities during the negotiation. Owing to the insistence of Lord John, the demand, as finally sent to

the Turk, requested that this suspension should last for a 'reasonable time'. The addition was not unimportant: a 'reasonable time' in Turkey proved to be less than a fortnight.

Lord Stratford's Note, therefore, was accepted by the Sultan and sent to the Tsar, but its arrival coincided with the news that Turkish troops had opened hostilities. A month earlier Nicholas would perhaps have accepted the terms offered him, but now he was surrounded by a military party led by religious enthusiasts and his own pride was stung by the first report of Turkish victories. The mood of Olmütz had passed.

Lord Aberdeen had missed the last opportunity for retaining his freedom. He had given way once more to public opinion. For to insist meant to break up the Government; to break up the Government meant that a war Ministry would be formed. Aberdeen, it is clear, would willingly have resigned, but he believed that the new negotiations, now reopened at Vienna, might succeed and that it was his duty to fight for peace until the last. And if Palmerston and Lord John resigned, how could Aberdeen and his friends explain to an irate public, now passionately in favour of Turkey, that it was necessary to force the Porte to adopt our Note without the opportunity of making alterations? 'To those,' wrote Aberdeen, 'who did not know all that had passed, such a condition would have appeared harsh and unjust, and I feel that it could not properly be made the ground of an irreconcilable difference in the Cabinet.'

'ODD TEMPERERS AND QUEER WAYS'

Lord Aberdeen had again given way, but his concession did not produce peace in his Cabinet. An interchange of memoranda between Prince Albert, Palmerston, and the Premier only emphasized the difference between the two latter. Palmerston insisted that England was now definitely committed to defend Turkey: 'We must help Turkey out of her difficulties by negotiation, if possible, and if negotiation fails we must, by force of arms, carry her safely through her dangers.' Aberdeen

insisted that the Cabinet was 'perfectly free to act as it thought best'. Lord Clarendon became increasingly convinced that here Lord Palmerston was right and, differing from his Premier almost for the first time, wrote:

'I must say that Palmerston makes out a very good case in support of his views and will be entitled to ask how far you consider we are bound by our recent acts, and at what point you will stop or recede. . . . We are now in an anomalous and painful position and, although I shall admit it to no one but yourself, I have arrived at the conviction that it might have been avoided by firmer language and a more decided course five months ago.'

Thus Cabinet meetings became increasingly difficult. Clarendon still found himself in an intermediate position between the placid militarism of Palmerston and the aggressive pacifism of Aberdeen. Palmerston, too, would throw out puzzling suggestions:

'We should find it very useful,' he wrote to Aberdeen on November 2nd, 'to maintain in our communications with Brunnow a mysterious indefiniteness and uncertainty as to the manner and degree of assistance which England and France may deem it right to give to Turkey.'

Clearly he was becoming less and less interested in his duties as Home Secretary and his ambition to be conducting foreign affairs was less disguised. When asked by the Queen whether he had news about the strikes which were agitating the north of England he is reported to have answered absently: 'No, Madam, I have heard nothing; but it seems certain that the Turks have crossed the Danube.'

A new difficulty now arose. Lord John had pledged himself to bring in a Reform Bill and, in spite of difficulties in the Cabinet, felt his honour necessitated its early introduction. Lord Palmerston objected to its provisions; Lord Lansdowne also seemed doubtful. The Eastern Question and the Reform Question became, as it were, alternate discords playing side by side in every Cabinet Council.

Perhaps the most unusual feature of the situation was that, whereas Lord John and Lord Palmerston separately seemed to hold much the same views on either subject, together they never agreed. 'Palmerston and Lord John Russell are somewhat jealous of each other,' wrote Sir James Graham to Sidney Herbert, 'and when one makes a concession, the other is disposed to hang back.' In the same way, he might have added, if one makes a new proposal the other attempts to rival it with one still more popular. 'John Russell,' wrote Greville after a conversation with Clarendon, 'is very reasonable, and agrees almost entirely with Clarendon, but whenever he thinks he is going to be outbid by Palmerston he is disposed to urge some violent measures also.'

The Cabinet, moreover, was very sensitive to outside opinion. Palmerston each day read *The Times* and there found the views of Lord Clarendon. Clarendon and Aberdeen had only to read the *Morning Post* to find the views of Lord Palmerston. The Cabinet, too, the Duke of Argyll tells us, 'was rather leaky. Things got out, we did not quite know how, and reports, not very correct, were circulated as to the part taken by individual members.' Argyll suggests that Sir William Molesworth's habit of jotting things down in a pocket-book may have been responsible for this leakage. Through him things may have 'reached the ears of Villiers, Kinglake, and Hayward'. The truth of Sir James Graham's remark at the opening of the session became daily more obvious. 'There are,' he had said of the new Cabinet, 'some odd tempers and queer ways among them.'¹ The odd tempers were increasingly odd and the queer ways jarred no less from daily repetition.

Lord Aberdeen was not the best of mediators. He felt the strain of disunity and was conscious that his position was a false one. The Duke of Argyll comments on the attitude of mind revealed in a letter written to him by the Premier on November 3rd:

¹ At one time an additional difficulty was Clarendon's conviction that Palmerston was in secret communication with Stratford.

'It was an attitude of intense annoyance with some of the most insuperable facts of the position in which we and all our allies were placed. We were driving straight into a war for, and with, a barbarous Government which had declined to follow our advice, which, nevertheless, could not stand alone, a Government whose interests were only partially, and perhaps only very temporarily, coincident with our own. A change of circumstances, which was not at all unlikely to occur, might destroy even this partial coincidence in a moment. One of the most important of our allies, Austria, whose direct interests were very much more nearly concerned than ours, was at that very moment holding aloof and even threatening separation from us until she saw what our next move would be. I quite agreed with Aberdeen that the situation was intolerably provoking.'

The Cabinet now presented a curious picture. One day Lord John Russell introduced a discussion of his Reform Bill; Lord Palmerston made a few minor criticisms. On reaching home, however, he wrote a letter to Lord John 'denouncing the measure as unnecessary and unwise'. Then, after criticizing the Bill in detail, he finally declared that he would consent to it. But having made a concession on one question, he felt entitled to have his own way on the other, and again urged the occupation of the Black Sea and the exclusion of the Russian fleet. Lord Aberdeen answered that this was equivalent to war, and Lord Clarendon pointed out that the Four Powers at Vienna were at that moment engaged in arranging terms which might quite easily lead to peace. Hoping for the best, Clarendon would then write dispatches in a moderate tone which Lord Aberdeen would criticize as too warlike. On one occasion, when Aberdeen began to make objections, even Clarendon lost his temper and 'broke out with the greatest vivacity'. 'Really this is too bad. You come now, after it has all been settled in the Cabinet, where you let it pass, and make all sorts of objections. And this is the way you do about everything; you object to all that is proposed, and you never suggest anything yourself. What is it

you want? Will you say what you would have done? Aberdeen had nothing to say and knocked under.' It was, indeed, as Clarendon said, a 'regular scene'.

The crisis came early in December. Lord Palmerston continued to raise difficulties over the Reform Bill and constantly urged that the English fleet should occupy the Black Sea. At length, after some correspondence with the Queen and with other members of the Cabinet, Lord Aberdeen answered that he could see no way to meet him on either question. Lord Palmerston then wrote definitely stating that he found himself unable to concur in Lord John's Reform Bill, which he had warned Lord Aberdeen might be the case when the Ministry was formed. He added that he was not prepared at *his time of life* to encounter endless debates in the House of Commons on such a measure.¹ It so happened that the announcement of his resignation coincided with the detailed news of a Turkish disaster in the Black Sea. A Russian fleet had caught six Turkish vessels cruising outside the open harbour of Sinope and with a deliberate intention, not uncommon in warfare, had sunk the ships and their crews.

On December 16th, therefore, the public knew that Lord Palmerston had resigned and that a Turkish squadron had been destroyed at Sinope. *The Times* announced that the two incidents were unconnected and that Lord Palmerston's resignation was due to his disagreement with Lord John's Reform Bill. On December 17th the *Morning Post* indignantly denied that Lord Palmerston was opposed to Reform and, in company with almost every other paper in the country, declared that his resignation was due to the 'un-English' foreign policy of our Government, which had allowed Turks to be massacred within a few miles of a British fleet.

¹ 'The first time,' Clarendon said, 'I had ever heard him acknowledge that he had a *time of life*.'

THE CABINET AND SINOPE

(December 14th-22nd)

It was, therefore, during Lord Palmerston's absence that the Cabinet were forced to deal with the new situation created by the incident of Sinope. The news was not unexpected. The peaceful members of the Cabinet had feared that Turkey would hasten a collision with the Russian fleet in order to involve the British fleet on her side. On November 8th, Clarendon had written to Stratford regretting that the promise of the Turks to refrain from hostilities 'had not been acted upon', and, on the 11th, had heard from Stratford that he had at any rate restrained the Turks from sending their fleet into the open sea. But neither he nor Aberdeen had much confidence in this new promise.

The Queen, too, had already anticipated the danger. As early as October 11th, she wrote: 'It appears to the Queen that we have taken on ourselves, in conjunction with the French, all the risks of a European war, without having bound Turkey to any conditions with respect to provoking it.'

That Turkey intended to provoke it was already clear to Aberdeen on November 20th, when he wrote to the Queen:

'It appears that Lord Stratford contemplates a hostile collision in the event of the fleet meeting with a Russian force, but even if this should not necessarily be the case, the Turks will take good care to produce it. They care little about the sacrifice of life, and will, undoubtedly, engage the Russian in the presence of the British fleet. It would be impossible for any British officer to see them defeated without rendering them assistance; and a flagrant act of hostility would be committed against Russia, without any declaration of war or due notice. Something of this kind sooner or later seems to be inevitable.'

During the next week news came that some Turkish vessels had actually put out into the Black Sea and the Queen wrote to Aberdeen: 'Wherefore should three poor Turkish steamers go to the Crimea, but to beard the Russian fleet, and to tempt it

to come out of Sevastopol, which would thus constitute the much desired contingency for our combined fleets to attack it and so engage us irretrievably?' The Prince Consort agreed: 'This can only be meant to insult the Russian fleet, and to entice it to come out in order thereby to make it possible for Lord Stratford to bring the fleet into collision.'

In the Cabinet the same view seems at first to have prevailed. The Turks had declared war and opened hostilities: no one could expect the Russian fleet to refrain from destroying any Turkish vessels that appeared within reach. The Duke of Argyll, many years afterwards, wrote of his feelings when the disaster of Sinope was announced to him: 'The silly and wayward Turks, after declaring war against Russia, had the inconceivable folly to send their little wretched fleet into the Black Sea and to anchor it in the open and undefended harbour of Sinope.' But we have also contemporary evidence that this was the general view of the Cabinet. Sinope at first seemed merely an unnecessary and annoying event for which provision had already been made and which required no new policy. On December 17th, three days after the confirmation of the news of Sinope, Clarendon wrote to Stratford that he 'had no doubt that the fleet had already entered the Black Sea to protect Constantinople',¹ and on the 20th added that the Government had just determined that no special instructions to the admirals were necessitated by the disaster. It had so far resisted the French proposals for special measures and was animated by an 'unabated desire for peace'. He informed Lord Stratford that 'the course which he was taking with a view to the adoption by the Porte of pacific counsels is in accordance with the wishes of Her Majesty's Government, as being calculated to prepare the Porte to give a favourable reception to the proposals which have been forwarded from Vienna'.

Two days later, however, the Cabinet completely altered their policy and accepted the French proposal to announce to

¹ Stratford needed no pushing. 'You have brought some good news,' he said, on receiving the news of Sinope, 'for that means *war*. The Emperor of Russia chose to make a personal quarrel with me and now I am avenged.'

the Tsar that 'every Russian ship thenceforward met in the Euxine would be requested, and if necessary constrained, to return to Sevastopol: and that any act of aggression afterwards attempted against the Ottoman territory or flag would be repelled by force'.

This decision was not a declaration of war but it was a challenge to Russia, and was necessarily fatal to the new peace proposals then on their way to the Tsar. The result was what might have been expected. Count Nesselrode requested an explanation of our demand, asking why the affair at Sinope was styled 'wanton aggression', in distinction from any other act of warfare, and further, whether the Black Sea was to be closed to Turkish as well as to Russian ships. The reply was unfavourable and the Russian ambassadors were withdrawn from Paris and London.

This sudden change in the policy of the Government must again be attributed to public opinion. Both in England and in France the disaster of Sinope had aroused a demand for immediate hostilities.¹ Lord Aberdeen explained the action of the Cabinet to the Queen with sufficient clearness. 'I should,' he said, 'have hesitated to agree to this proposal had it not been evident that the continuance of the French alliance depended upon its adoption. It was stated very unequivocally that the Emperor of the French would either execute the project alone, or that he would withdraw his fleet to Toulon, and the whole tone of the French communications was exacting and peremptory. This appeared to be mainly owing to the present state of feeling in France, in consequence of the Sinope affair, and unfortunately public opinion in this country would not permit the risk of dissolving the alliance at this juncture by the assertion of a little more independence.'

This, however, is not the whole story. The pressure of Napoleon without, coupled with the frenzy of public opinion at home, was too strong for Aberdeen. But other members of

¹ French opinion had not, until Sinope, been excited against the Tsar. Even now it was quiet in comparison with English. Simpson, *Louis Napoleon and the Recovery of France, 1848-56* (1923), pp. 243-4.

the Cabinet were beginning to despair of peace in spite of their long opposition to public sentiment. For, as Clarendon said, England was in a 'ridiculous position'. Her fleet had been advanced in order to protect Turkey: yet Sinope had occurred almost within earshot of our sailors. How could Cabinet Ministers, even though they knew that Russia was not in this instance to blame, have explained to an angry Parliament that we were protecting Turkey and yet not at war with Russia; that our fleet was in the Black Sea to defend an ally against an enemy with whom we must not come to blows?

In view of the impossibility of defending this position Lord Clarendon was in favour of falling in with Napoleon's suggestion. 'You think,' he wrote to Lord Aberdeen, 'that I care too much for public opinion, but really when the frightful carnage at Sinope comes to be known we shall be *utterly disgraced* if, upon the mere score of humanity, we don't take active measures to prevent any more such outrages.'

Sir James Graham, too, felt that in some subtle way action, undesirable before Sinope, became necessary after it.

'I have,' he wrote, 'been one of the most strenuous advocates of peace with Russia until the last moment; but the Sinope attack and recent events have changed entirely the aspect of affairs. I am afraid that a rupture with Russia is inevitable.'

Almost the whole Cabinet felt that England's position was now indefensible, and that the only course was to take some strong line which would remove the reproach of 'antiquated imbecility', even though it would also undo all the careful labour of peace negotiation. On the decision, December 22nd, Sir Charles Wood explained his attitude. 'We had then a long discussion on the question of occupying the Black Sea, as proposed by France, and it seemed to me to be such a tissue of confusion that I advocated the simple course of doing so.' Mr. Gladstone could not agree to this simple course. 'He said he could be no party to unconditional occupation', and proposed to occupy the Black Sea only on condition that the Turks accepted the Vienna proposals. The Duke of Newcastle and Sir

THE COMPLETION OF THE PICTURE

Charles Wood argued that this would commit England even more than simple occupation. Eventually, in deference to Mr. Gladstone, the Cabinet decided to aid France in preventing the passage of Russian ships on condition that Napoleon supported England in urging the peace proposals upon the Turks. But there was never any difficulty in enforcing these conditions on the Turks, who well knew that the allied ultimatum demanding the withdrawal of Russian ships would make the Tsar's acceptance of the Note impossible. Kinglake, in commenting on this decision, makes a remark which shows a keen observation of Mr. Gladstone's character and possibly a knowledge of the notebook kept by Sir William Molesworth which I have previously mentioned. He writes:

'The proposal seemed made to win the Chancellor of the Exchequer; for it fell short of war by a measure of distance which, though it might seem very small to people with common eyesight, was more than broad enough to afford commodious standing-room to a man delighting as he did in refinements and slender distinctions.'

This decision was taken on December 22nd; on the 24th Lord Palmerston returned to office. Greville, after a conversation with Sir James Graham, reported that 'Palmerston is quite at his ease and just as if nothing had happened, which was exactly like him'. The Coalition continued and Lord Palmerston was its most comfortable member.

THE RESIGNATION OF LORD PALMERSTON

(December 14th-24th)

Lord Palmerston's conduct in resigning on December 14th, and resuming office in the Cabinet ten days later, bewildered contemporary observers and has not been explained by subsequent historians. Outside the small circle of informed opinion, his resignation was almost universally believed to be due to disagreement with his colleagues on the Eastern Question, supplemented by unconstitutional pressure exerted by the Crown. In

Kinglake's opinion the popular view that Palmerston was a second time a victim to Prince Albert's interference was correct.¹ Mr. Strachey wrote: 'The cause of Palmerston's resignation, indeed, remains wrapped in obscurity, and it is possible that it was brought about by the continued hostility of the Court.'

The unpublished letters of Lord Aberdeen, without completely clearing the matter up, do enable us to settle some of the difficulties. In the first place, pressure from the Court was almost certainly not the cause of his resignation. Both Albert and the Queen were glad, as indeed they always were, to have Palmerston out of office and would have liked to prevent his return, but Palmerston was the first to suggest his resignation and Aberdeen was prepared to accept it without any interference from the Crown. In December it had become clear that the Cabinet could not remain even nominally united. On the 6th, Aberdeen wrote to the Queen that Palmerston had sent him a letter explaining that he was unable to accept Lord John's Reform Bill and added that 'it is by no means improbable that Lord Palmerston may also desire to separate himself from the Government, in consequence of their pacific policy, and in order to take the lead of the war party and the anti-reformers in the House of Commons who are essentially the same. Such a combination would, undoubtedly, be formidable; but Lord Aberdeen trusts that it would not prove dangerous. At all events, it would tend greatly to the improvement of Lord John's foreign policy.'

On the next day the Queen replied: 'With respect to Lord Palmerston, the Queen is not surprised at his communication to Lord Aberdeen. The Queen would very much advise Lord Aberdeen to let him go at once. He will be a source of mischief to the country as long as he lives; but the Queen has now ample and varied experience that the mischief he is able to do *in office exceeds any* he can do in Opposition. If he is to go, as he most probably will, anyhow, let it be on the *Reform Question*, which

¹ Kinglake, II, pp. 27-32. He speaks mysteriously of 'information which he is not at liberty to divulge'.

is unpopular ground, and not on a popular question of his own choosing, for which he has plenty of ingenuity.'

Three days later the Prince Consort, writing on behalf of himself and the Queen, declared that the Reform Bill would have 'no chance of success unless introduced by a united Cabinet', but that, 'if Lord Palmerston has made up his mind to oppose and to leave the Government, there will be no use in trying to keep him in it. . . . Under these circumstances, it becomes of the highest importance to ascertain:

'First, what the amount of objection is that Lord Palmerston entertains to the measure:

'Second, what the object of the declaration was that he seems to have made to you. This should be obtained in *writing*, so as to make all future misrepresentation or equivocation impossible.'

In the same way, when the question of Palmerston resuming office was mentioned, the Queen was bitterly hostile to him, but her attitude did not in any way affect the actions either of Palmerston or Aberdeen. If it is the duty of the throne to be neutral in disputes between Ministers, Queen Victoria was never a constitutional monarch. Lord Palmerston had not received any official confirmation of his resignation, and the Queen, on hearing that he was reconsidering his position, wrote: 'Although Lord Aberdeen may not have officially communicated to Lord Palmerston the Queen's acceptance of his resignation, yet that acceptance has taken place and the Queen has allowed the seals to be offered to Sir George Grey. If Sir George hesitates, it is but natural to presume that he has, in some manner, been made aware of Lord Palmerston's wish to retain them after all. The Queen's opinion on Lord Palmerston's resignation (and one strongly corroborated by facts as well as appearances) is that Lord Palmerston has long meditated to drive out Lord Aberdeen and, this failing, to break up the Government. He had latterly hoped to take Lord John and Lord Lansdowne with him. Lord Aberdeen need not be reminded that he had himself, in his treatment of the Oriental

Question, continually to fence with this danger, to the great detriment of our foreign policy.

'In the last instance Lord Palmerston seems to have thought that he could throw over Lord John also, provided Lord Lansdowne went with him (hence the statement of his objections to the Reform Bill, made *in a letter* to Lord Lansdowne). If he repents now, it is from seeing that he has chosen an unpopular ground, on which he will expose himself to the condemnation of his former Radical admirers, and from finding that Lansdowne is likely to be propitiated and stay,¹ whereby he will have damaged his own position without the injury to the Government which he intended.

'Can any useful end be obtained by allowing him to return and choose a better opportunity of accomplishing his purpose on more popular ground; and will the Government not be seriously damaged in the eyes of the country by its being thought, either that an intrigue had temporarily succeeded in displacing Lord Palmerston, but that the conviction that the Government could not do without him had obliged them to readmit him, or that such concessions had been made on the Reform Bill as will make the country doubt the sincerity of the intentions of the Cabinet with regard to that question?

'The Queen would say that Lord Palmerston's character also would suffer under the circumstances, did she not know his unscrupulous dexterity, enabling him to represent himself, even in this instance, as an innocent, injured man whose traducers had been finally obliged to beg him on their knees to come back.

'The fear entertained of Lord Palmerston's power in Opposition has always appeared to the Queen to be unduly exaggerated.'

This letter constitutes the nearest approach to royal interference on this occasion. The Queen was here, as always, a strong partisan, and in every case attributed the worst motive

¹ The Queen wrote to Lansdowne to 'propitiate him' into staying. The letter is in Aberdeen's correspondence.

to Palmerston and urged her view upon Aberdeen. In spite of her wishes, however, Palmerston returned to office, and the effects of his return were just those which she had feared.

The royal will, then, did not materially affect the situation. We are left with two questions. Firstly, what was the real ground for Palmerston's resignation? Secondly, why did he return ten days later? The public universally believed that the disaster at Sinope was the occasion of his departure. But the first rumours of Sinope did not reach England until December 10th, and Palmerston had already expressed his final inability to go further with the Government policy of Reform as early as the 6th. He resigned on the day of the confirmation of the news of Sinope; it is therefore possible that distaste for membership in a Cabinet which might not act vigorously, even after Sinope, rendered his final decision easier to make.

It is equally difficult to believe that his attitude was solely determined by the Reform Question. He stated that his objection to Lord John's Bill was one of 'principle'; yet he actually returned to the Cabinet without any concessions being made and was willing to accept the Bill in its original form. There can be no doubt that he felt a genuine dislike for the Reform Bill, but he was willing to swallow his objections in the event of agreement on other issues.

The facts appear to be these: Palmerston threatened resignation on both questions. Perhaps he thought Aberdeen would give way on both rather than risk the fall of the Government. In any case he intended to change its policy or to leave it. He told Aberdeen he could go no further with Reform. Aberdeen, as we have seen, wrote immediately to the Queen that Palmerston was likely to resign. He agreed with Her Majesty that this was desirable if the cause of his resignation was the unpopular issue of Reform and not the dangerous topic of the Eastern Question. Indeed, so anxious was he to be able to carry out a pacific foreign policy unhindered by Palmerston, that it is possible that he read more eagerness to resign into Palmerston's

letter than its writer had intended.¹ But Palmerston was not to be got rid of so cheaply. He knew that Lord Lansdowne most nearly agreed with him on Reform. He therefore wrote a long explanation of his objections to the Bill to Lord Lansdowne who received it with considerable embarrassment and for some time hesitated whether to resign with him. Palmerston then sent a copy of this letter to Aberdeen, enclosed with a statement of his view that Russian ships-of-war should be prevented from cruising in the Black Sea. The letter had the appearance of an ultimatum on both questions.

Lord Aberdeen accepted it as such. He was dismayed to find that the Eastern Question was to enter into the resignation after all. Accordingly he wrote to Sir James Graham:

'This is a very dexterous move. P. has stolen a march on us by combining the Eastern Question with Reform. I am at a loss what to do: Lord John requested me not to communicate with Palmerston until he had seen me on Monday; but he did not anticipate such a letter as this. . . . Truly he [Palmerston] is a great artist.'

Sir James Graham replied on the same day:

'We have a crafty foe to deal with; but these very clever men sometimes outwit themselves. The letter to Lansdowne contains nearly all we want or that we could have hoped to extract in black and white. My only desire is that you should have a copy of this letter and of Lord Lansdowne's answer, which you may be at liberty to use. . . . The letter to Lord Lansdowne touches very lightly on the Eastern Question and puts Reform prominently forward. For this reason it suits our purpose best: and I would advise strongly that you confine your observations in answer principally, if not exclusively, to that letter, and make the difference on the Foreign Question secondary in your estimation.'

¹ Sir Arthur Gordon (the fourth son of Lord Aberdeen, afterwards Lord Stanmore and at that time Governor of Ceylon) wrote to Reeve in 1888, that when in 1853 Palmerston 'announced his hostility to Reform, it was determined to take advantage of this announcement to remove him'. His further statement that Palmerston was 'in fact, extruded', seems inaccurate. He was writing from memory after a lapse of thirty-four years. Cp. the account in John Knox Laughton's *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Henry Reeve* (1898), vol. II, p. 356.

When Palmerston did resign, four days later, it was impossible to say which was the decisive question. The Government newspapers, led by *The Times*, followed the policy advocated by the Queen and Sir James Graham, and insisted that Reform was the sole cause. The *Morning Post*, directly under the inspiration of Palmerston, was equally sure that the Eastern Question was the decisive issue. Other papers were, of course, unanimous in believing the *Morning Post*. Thus the manœuvring that we have seen in the Cabinet became obvious to the outside world, with a result entirely favourable to Palmerston.

But there is still a difficulty. If Palmerston contemplated resignation, why did he mention the Reform issue at all? Clearly, had he resigned on the Eastern Question alone, he would have carried the country with him, would probably have destroyed the Government and have been able to enforce the adoption of his own policy in the East. Greville was strongly impressed with his forbearance. 'It is strange,' he wrote, 'to find myself the advocate and apologist for Palmerston, when the preceding pages are brimful of censure of his acts and bad opinion of his character; but, whatever prejudices I may have or have had against him, they never shall prevent my saying what I believe to be true, and doing him ample justice, when I think that he is acting honourably, fairly, and conscientiously. This letter to Lansdowne has a little shaken my convictions, but still I am struck with the fact of his having refrained from resigning on the Eastern Question, when by so doing he might have damaged the Government immensely, and obtained for himself increased popularity and considerable power if these were his objects.'

Perhaps a measure of praise is due to Palmerston for not wantonly overthrowing the Government and destroying the last hope of peace with Russia. But there is one important point which Greville overlooked and which the Queen, in discussing Palmerston's motives for resigning, had noticed but not understood. If Lord Palmerston had resigned on the Eastern Question Lord John would probably have followed him. On the Reform

Question, Lord Lansdowne might resign with him, but clearly Lord John could not. After his dismissal in 1851 Palmerston had always made it perfectly clear that he would never again serve under Lord John, even though Lord John was still the recognized leader of the Whigs. No one had then thought of Palmerston as a possible Premier during Russell's lifetime. But whether he had the premiership in mind or not it is probable that Palmerston wished for the popularity of resigning from the most unpopular of Cabinets and did not desire Lord John to share in that popularity. He wished to be rid of Lord John. He therefore accepted Reform as the Cabinet reason for his resignation, and allowed the country, aided by the *Morning Post*, to form a different conclusion.

Out of office, he found that his popularity was even greater than he expected. But Lord Lansdowne had not resigned with him and the Government would be able, at any rate for a time, to continue without him. To turn out the Government he would have to go into Opposition. This is what everyone expected him to do. But in one thing at least Lord Palmerston was consistent—he would not join the Tories. The Tories constantly hoped for his secession, and he was willing to encourage them in their hopes, but he was a Whig and intended to remain one. When he heard that in his absence the Cabinet had adopted the decisive measure against Russia which he had long advocated, it seemed well to resume office. It would naturally be supposed that the Government's change of policy was the price of his return. He allowed his wife and friends to open negotiations, neither asked nor offered any concessions, and wrote to Lord Aberdeen explaining that he had been under a misapprehension as to the Reform Bill. Apparently its provisions were not, as he had thought, 'finally settled'. His friends in the Government, he said, therefore advised him to 'withdraw a resignation which, they assure me, was founded on a misconception on my part.'¹

¹ As a matter of fact the Reform Bill had not been discussed since he left the Cabinet when none of its provisions were 'finally settled'.

'You will perhaps allow me to add that the decision, which I am informed the Cabinet came to yesterday, to accede to the proposal of the French Government, whereby the British and French squadrons will have the command of the Black Sea, greatly enters into the consideration[s] which have led me to address this letter to you.'

Aberdeen's reply showed that he appreciated the humour of the situation and that he was a match for Palmerston in private though Palmerston might win all the public honours.

'As I had communicated your resignation of office to the Queen, I thought it right to take Her Majesty's pleasure before answering your letter received this morning.

'I confess that I cannot well understand how you could infer from my letter of the 14th inst., that the details of the intended Reform Bill had been finally settled by the Government, and that no objection to any part of those details would be listened to, as you were yourself a member of the committee which had not completed its deliberations, when, by your letter to me of the 10th inst., you expressed very decided opinions adverse to all the leading provisions of the proposed measure. However, I wish to say no more upon that which you allow to have been a misconception on your part; and I very readily agree to consider your letter of the 14th inst. cancelled.

'Although not connected with the cause of your resignation, I am glad to find that you approve of a recent decision of the Cabinet, with respect to the British and French fleets, adopted in your absence. I feel assured you will have learnt with pleasure, that, whether absent or present, the Government are duly careful to preserve from all injury the interests and dignity of the country.'

Next day Lord Palmerston returned to the Cabinet. He had gained all round. His popularity was greater than ever. Outside immediate Government circles everyone believed that he had returned on his own terms, though in fact no concession had been made to him. In the war with Russia he became the most prominent Minister; he did not join the Tories, he did not

THE TRIUMPH OF LORD PALMERSTON

serve under Lord John, and, as it happened, he did not even have to become party to the Reform Bill.¹ After a short interval he became Prime Minister with Lord John serving as a member of his Cabinet.

Lady Palmerston was justifiably proud. 'He is always right in everything he does,' she said, and who could contradict her?

THE ENLIGHTENED TURK

(Public Opinion—October–December)

The news of the Sultan's ultimatum to the Tsar, so irritating to Lord Clarendon and his fellow peacemakers, was greeted with joyous enthusiasm by the British public. During the autumn and winter, mass meetings were held in every part of the country. Almost complete unanimity was displayed: firstly, in denouncing Lord Aberdeen for his pro-Russian policy; secondly, in calling upon Lord Palmerston to conduct the nation to the aid of Turkey; thirdly, in execrating the Tsar as the odious oppressor of European liberty, and lastly, in eulogizing the Sultan as the defender of liberalism and the bulwark of Europe against Russian aggression. Mention of the Sultan himself now evoked that tumultuous applause usually reserved by the British public for the triumphant athlete. The Eastern Question had, indeed, become a sporting encounter between Russia and Turkey—with the betting heavily on the latter. But there were still a few who wondered whether Turkey might not prove to be the 'wrong horse'.

Everywhere abuse of the Tsar alternated with praise of the Sultan. On October 5th, the news that Turkey had offered to declare war was announced to a meeting which had been summoned to inform the Government of its views on the Eastern Question. 'Rapturous applause' greeted the announcement, and the chief speaker, Captain Harris, was assured that the public would not 'suffer England to fall in the eyes of the

¹ Lord John introduced his Reform Bill in March, but as no one showed any interest in it, it was abandoned.

Turks', who were 'among the most enlightened of European nations, if enlightenment meant high moral principle'.

At Glasgow an equally enthusiastic meeting was addressed by a Mr. Kennedy who, having been for four years an attendant of the Tsar, offered to give some account of his character. He was, however, hissed off the platform for the incautious statement that 'apart from his public character, no man was more affectionate, both as a husband, a father, and a friend'. On his attempting to resume, the chairman refused to allow him further to annoy the audience, who had come, he said, 'to be enlightened', and not to hear Mr. Kennedy tell stories of the amiability of the Tsar.

On October 7th, a meeting on the Eastern Question was called at the London Tavern. Why, asked a speaker, was our Government not actively helping the Turks? Because our Government was a weak, vacillating, perhaps treacherous, one. 'If,' he went on, 'we had a bold, energetic, far-seeing man at the head of affairs [loud cries of "Palmerston"]', yes, if we had such a man as Lord Palmerston I do not think the Russian armies would have crossed the Pruth.' When the applause had died away, a member of the audience, mindful of the speeches of Kossuth and the writings of David Urquhart, rose to ask why, in that case, Palmerston had not prevented the Tsar from crushing the Hungarian Revolution in 1849. The speaker's answer was accepted with ready enthusiasm. At that time, he pointed out, the Manchester men had been in the ascendant, the Army and Navy had been reduced, and Palmerston would not bark because he knew that England could not bite.

A slightly different answer to the same question was given to two thousand people who had met together in a theatre at Chester. Lord Palmerston had not aided Hungary five years before, said an orator, because he had no support in the country. Then the public had been apathetic: now was the time to demonstrate the truth of Palmerston's declaration that 'public opinion is more powerful than the charges of cavalry or the thunder of artillery'.

At this meeting the Government was charged with refusing information, with continuing negotiations, and attempting to deceive English people into the idea that peace was possible. In fact, declared the principal speaker amid great enthusiasm, the people of England had too little share in the management of foreign affairs, and found that they were not being conducted in a 'straight-forward old-English manner'. He was ashamed to say that 'diplomacy' was afoot: it was a 'foreign word, an ambiguous word, a sneaking word'. No doubt, he said, there was truth in the idea that all men were brothers, but sometimes even a brother must be treated with a just severity. Russia had forfeited all claim to fraternal affection. Her treatment of the refugees, her pretence of religious obligation as an excuse for aggression in the Balkans, were alone sufficient to cut her off from the family of nations. It was time to marshal the democracies of the world—unfortunately Austria and Sweden would be on the side of tyranny, but France, America, Hungary, and Poland—and a burst of cheering greeted each name—would be on the side of Liberty.

He then proposed a comprehensive resolution which was passed by acclamation: That England should assist the Sultan 'by the strongest warlike measures' . . . on the ground that 'there is no sovereign in Europe who has higher claims than the Sultan to the support of this country: no sovereign . . . who has done more for religious toleration; for he has established religious equality in his dominions. It would be no dishonour to Englishmen if they were to rank him with the Alfreds and Edwards: and, if properly supported at the present crisis by the nations of West Europe, he will make his dominions happy and prosperous and establish commercial relations of mutual advantage between them and Great Britain'.

It is a curious picture. In a palace on the Bosphorus sat the Sultan, a fleshy and irascible debauchee, usually intoxicated and always lethargic, surrounded by a group of Mohammedan fanatics of whose plots to supplant him he was dimly aware and whose ability to rouse the fury of a priest-ridden mob kept

him in abject terror and peevish submission. In England were public halls, crowded with respectable shopkeepers, evangelical maiden ladies, and stolid artisans enthusiastically proffering their lives and money in the service of this obese little tyrant in a fez, whose name they could not pronounce and whose habits of life were as unknown to them as those of a prehistoric monster.

Yet their conduct was neither exceptional nor irrational. They were merely behaving normally in accordance with their picture of the situation. This picture was a mistaken one built up from past associations; present facts had to fit into it as best they might. Perhaps this is best illustrated by the controversy about the decadence of Turkey. That Turkey was a decaying power which could not much longer retain her hold upon her Christian subjects had been a common belief put forward by numerous writers. A few pamphlets, restating this opinion, continued to appear during the later months of 1853. 'Pacifcus' was glad that no treaty bound us to aid Turkey, whose declaration of war against Russia relieved us of the 'necessity of firing a shot in the cause of unimproving barbarism against progressive civilization'. The gradual strengthening of Greece seemed the only solution to the Near Eastern Problem. 'Veritas', declaring that Turkey was 'sunk in barbarism', gave examples of atrocities committed against the Christians in the Balkans, and added that Russian encroachment was a 'bugbear'. The only solution was to divide the Turkish Empire harmoniously between England, France, Russia, and Austria. But this point of view became increasingly rare. It was answered in two ways. The first answer was that, if Turkey was weak, there was all the more reason for protecting her against aggression. The second answer was a simple denial. Many books and pamphlets appeared during the later part of the year with one object in view—to prove the reforming spirit in Turkey and to show the weakness of the Tsar. Most influential of these was *The Shores of the Black Sea* by Laurence Oliphant, which went through four editions in six months. Mr. Oliphant declared that Russian

strength was much over-estimated, yet this did not prevent her from being dangerous to Turkey and to Europe. Only a small part of the Russian Navy was seaworthy, and so little accustomed were her sailors to their work that they could not navigate a ship in the Black Sea, even on the rare occasions when they were not sea-sick. Their fortress of Sevastopol, so imposing to the eye, was defended with pieces of artillery which could not be fired without bringing down the 'rotten batteries'. 'Lack of communications, climate, and corruption' prevented the Army from being of any account. It was, in fact, merely a 'review army'—a glittering 'Imperial plaything'. And yet, Russia was dangerous. Her hold upon the Black Sea was fatal to trade, her expansion in Asia was a menace to Persia and, worse, to India.¹ She was already the great enemy of freedom in Poland and Hungary, while 'the next Revolution in France would see Italy occupied by Russian troops'. But Russia knew her own weakness, relied on 'haughty blustering', and, if attacked, would fall to pieces. The Cossacks, bemoaning their ancient freedom, would rise against the Tsar; Georgia could be enlisted on our side and general revolt would follow. For everywhere, 'from the Baltic to the Black Sea, from the shores of the Danube to the banks of the Pheisis, extends an indissoluble bond of sympathy—a deeply rooted hatred of Russia'.²

This view of the situation was the easily accepted one. It is good to believe in an enemy's weakness. The newspapers which had been largely instrumental in creating the popular image of the Eastern Question must now perforce conform to it. To Mr. Urquhart the excitement in the country was an eloquent testimony to the efficacy of his own articles. 'I find,' he wrote, 'the phrase has become current that I am rousing the democracy of England.' The *Morning Post*, without assuming sole

¹ Laurence Oliphant was one of the first to introduce the 'Road to India' motive, which appears only occasionally in 1853-4. Morley (*Life of Richard Cobden*, vol. II, p. 150) is incorrect in saying it had not yet been invented, but it did not play a principal part in the Crimean period.

² *The Shores of the Black Sea* (1st edition, October 1853; 4th edition, March 1854), pp. 257-60, 320-65. For reviews of other books on Russia and Turkey in 1853, cp. the *Edinburgh Review*, January 1854, and the *Westminster Review*, December 1853, where Mr. Urquhart's published articles were examined.

responsibility for the soundness of the popular view of the Eastern Question, was sure that only surrender on the Tsar's part could justify the continuation of peace; it sternly pointed out to him that his conciliatory remarks at Olmütz had come too late, and by the middle of October it had become persuaded that there 'will be no more Notes'. The *Morning Herald* wished to know if it were possible that England was 'really again to be humiliated by negotiations' and solemnly warned the Government that 'for any Englishman to betray the cause of Turkey is to betray the Queen'.

In November, the suggestion that the Tsar might still give way, and the announcement that new peace terms were being arranged at Vienna, were both denounced as methods of gaining time for the Tsar; Austria's duplicity was taken for granted, and a crescendo of enthusiasm greeted the news of Turkish victories. On November 12th a manifesto issued by the Tsar, summoning God to the aid of the True Church against the pagan hosts of Islam, was an opportunity for the most scathing flights of editorial satire.

But even now there were papers which refused to conform to the popular image. Peace proposals were still going forward and an uneasy recollection of former accounts of Turkish misrule haunted the columns of the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Morning Chronicle*. The latter, it is true, had ceased to hope for peace but was always gentle in its treatment of its governmental patrons and sceptical about the reform of the Ottoman Empire. The *Manchester Guardian* was alone in stating that information from the East was so scanty as to make accurate judgment on these matters impossible. It ridiculed both the enthusiasm evinced for Turkey at the London Tavern meeting and the pretensions of the Peace Society to influence public opinion at their Edinburgh conference.¹ It declared that 'everyone is sick of the Eastern Question' and deplored that

¹ The conference was held on October 12th, and was addressed by many Non-conformist M.P.s and others. Bright and Cobden, who were the most prominent speakers, made lengthy addresses on completely pacifist lines. Most of the other speakers were more cautious.

'even a casual battle, in the present excited state of feeling, would be a deplorable event, exciting a taste for bloodshed'.

The Times held the same position. Delane had not yet become one of the public. His intimacy with Cabinet Ministers prevented his sharing the popular delusions of Turkish blamelessness. On October 4th, he 'was sent for by Lord Aberdeen' and a long conversation followed in which 'Aberdeen told him that he was resolved to be no party to a war with Russia on such grounds as the present, and he was prepared to resign rather than incur such responsibility'.

Delane agreed with him that there were as yet no grounds for war, and throughout October *The Times* reiterated that the negotiations were still likely to prove successful. Turkey should, if possible, be restrained from actual hostilities, and the Four Powers could then find a path of 'moderation and wisdom' for Russia's retreat. Moreover, Delane was largely in agreement with John Bright, when in an open letter of October 13th he stated that 'war will not save Turkey if peace cannot save her; but war will brutalize our people, increase our taxes, destroy our industry, and postpone Parliamentary Reform, it may be for years. . . .'

On October 14th, however, came the report of a conference of the Peace Society at Edinburgh. Delane was exceedingly annoyed by the extreme form of pacifism, and *The Times* ridiculed the Quakers as mercilessly as the *Morning Post*. It was remarkable how nearly this ridicule of the peace party approached to support of the war party. Aberdeen felt that Delane was deserting him, and, on the next day, wrote that: 'Without supporting the absurdities of the Peace Conference or even while ridiculing them as much as you please, I think that both the principal speakers uttered so much truth as to deserve a different treatment, by which the cause of peace might have been further advanced. I should say that *The Times* contains an article as practically warlike as any that has appeared.'

The attitude complained of by Aberdeen in this letter was the prevailing one in *The Times* throughout November. The

truth was that Delane had no real hope of peace, but his friendship for Aberdeen, and his realization that the negotiations ought to be given the best opportunities of success, prevented him from advocating strong measures against Russia. On November 5th, Reeve returned from the East with stories of corruption, weakness, and incompetence in the Ottoman Empire, the latest information about the Austrian peace projects, and admirable gossip about Lord Stratford's success in exasperating the Tsar and controlling the affairs of the Sultan to his own satisfaction.¹

During the next few days, therefore, the usual parts are reversed and, instead of the Government supplying *The Times* with information, we find Clarendon writing to Reeve to know whether the idea of the Porte addressing a Note to the Conference at Vienna had originated with Count Buol and if it would be accepted by Russia as a mode of negotiation. *The Times*, alone among London papers, continued to take interest in these negotiations and at the beginning of December had become more hopeful of their success. On December 9th, Clarendon wrote to Delane to tell him in the 'most confidential' manner that 'all possible pressure' was 'being applied to Austria' and made it clear that he had 'considerable hopes in Buol, who rejoiced to find himself *concurring in the policy of England and France*'.

Thus, up to December 12th, *The Times* was of the opinion that, with the Four Powers united, Russia would give way, and even went so far as to state that now, Austria having definitely cast in her lot with England and France, it was 'altogether improbable that the general security of Europe should be materially disturbed'.

But on December 13th came the first public announcement of the incident of Sinope.

¹ 'Stratford boasted to Reeve that he had carried a great point, and had procured the appointment of the candidate he favoured as Greek patriarch, an interference which, if it had been made by the Emperor of Russia, whose concern it is much more than ours, would have excited in us great indignation.' Greville, vol. VII, p. 104.

The incident of Sinope completed a picture and provided a motive. It is possible that the popular excitement would have raged and died away after the manner of other panics, had it not been for the stimulus of a disaster which seemed disgraceful and which was certainly humiliating. Public meetings in England were already unanimous in their denunciation of the Tsar and their praise of the Sultan; some already demanded that armed help should be given to Turkey. But many who would contentedly vote for general resolutions were opposed to what Lord Stratford called a 'comprehensive war'. When it came to the point, the more cautious, though glad that our fleet was protecting Turkey, feared for our commerce in the event of an Eastern war, and were anxious rather to aid the Turks by resolutions at public meetings than by an expenditure of blood and treasure. Moreover, during November, it seemed that the Turks could look after themselves, and the readiness of our fleet seemed to be all that honour required. In October, Mr. Gladstone found a division of opinion when he addressed a meeting at Manchester, and wrote to Aberdeen that he was inclined to think the peace party 'decidedly the stronger'. In fact, before Sinope, though the picture of Russian guilt and Turkish heroism was clear, there was no event round which public sentiment could crystallize. The British public was not yet convinced that the interests of Christianity or the safety of the Empire demanded an immediate declaration of war. The moral motive was still lacking. This need was supplied by the news of the engagement at Sinope. On the same day Lord Palmerston's resignation was made public. The effect of this double announcement was overwhelming. Seldom has public sentiment run so high or so menacingly as it did during the month that followed. For now the popular picture of the Eastern situation was completed, and the most horrible conjectures of the imagination of David Urquhart seemed justified. The Tsar, already the incarnate soul of evil, had once more put forth his

hand to torture and destroy: the Sultan, victorious hero though he might be, was hard pressed in the fight with darkness: England, pledged to his assistance, had stood idly by and watched the massacre of his sailors. Our national honour was trailed in the dust and our Ministers proved to be treacherous agents of the Tsar. Among them there had been one man whom the people had trusted, one English gentleman who would never betray his country. And he, in verification of every fear, was driven from office!

Divisions of opinion as to the need for war with Russia now disappeared. *The Times*, the *Globe*, the *Chronicle*, and the *Manchester Guardian* all put aside their doubts. All the niceties of the subject, all the fear that Turkey was not worth fighting for, all the forebodings about our commerce and hesitations about Christianity—all were swept away. The *Manchester Guardian*, which was least affected by the popular frenzy, admitted that war was 'inevitable'. The *Globe* was at first so sure that Turkey was fighting a victorious war that it refused to believe that Russian ships could have destroyed Turkish ones. The story of Sinope was obviously a piece of Russia's boastfulness. On the 14th, therefore, it declared that details had come to hand showing that an immensely superior Russian force, although victorious, came out of the engagement 'in a scarcely less shattered condition than its opponents'. A few days later, when it became impossible to doubt that Sinope was a Turkish disaster, an editorial complained that 'our statesmen (and we do not in the least except the regretted Lord Palmerston) have been too much in the habit of transacting business with Russia as if Russia were accessible to the ordinary motives of the rest of the European family'.

The *Morning Chronicle* suffered a similar change. On the staff there was only one writer who doubted. Abraham Hayward realized that Sinope was merely an incident of warfare which ought to make no difference to our policy. But his colleagues did not agree. 'What has come over Harcourt?' he asked in a letter on the 19th. 'His language seems borrowed from the

Herald or *Standard*. Cook, too, is getting too bellicose. I had a long talk with him yesterday and I have written again today. The articles in this day's paper appear to me to be in the right tone. He is a good fellow and open to reason, but rather apt to be swayed by men like Harcourt, who, though a clever fellow, is rather too fond of strong language and uncompromising steps.' But his talk with Cook seems to have had little effect. On the 20th, the *Chronicle* declared that: 'This must end. To stop the unprofitable contest by striking down the aggressor with a blow is as plain a duty towards humanity as it was to send succour to Sinope.' On the 21st, Sinope is termed an 'atrocious outrage' and, on the 23rd, lapsing into the language which has become the classical formula on the eve of hostilities, it declared that: 'We shall draw the sword, if draw it we must, not only to preserve the independence of an ally, but to humble the ambition and thwart the machinations of a despot whose intolerable pretensions have made him the enemy of all civilized nations.'

The Times made an even more noteworthy change. Delane and Reeve, knowing that even Clarendon and Aberdeen felt that England's false position in the Dardanelles had rendered it necessary for us 'to take a decisive part', at once threw aside their previous hopes of peace. As soon as the news of the engagement arrived, *The Times* stated that Sinope 'dispels the hopes we have been led to entertain of pacification. . . . We have thought it our duty to uphold and defend the cause of peace as long as peace was compatible with the honour and dignity of our country . . . but now . . . war has begun in earnest.'¹

With other papers there was no need of apology for the demand for war. On the 16th, the *Morning Post* declared that Sinope was 'not a naval engagement' but a 'violent outrage' which called for immediate war; the *Morning Herald* demanded that 'the damning disgrace of Sinope should be revenged at

¹ There was still, however, a hint of caution in *The Times* not to be found elsewhere. It suggested that we might wait for the reply to our ultimatum before going to war, and that the extent of our commitments to Turkey should be stated when we fought for her (December 14th and 19th).

Sevastopol', and went on to declare that there were 'no bounds to the schemes of the Muscovite' whose ambitions would reach to Persia and India where the Tsar could 'then carry out the Asiatic provisions of the testament of Peter the Shipwright'.

The news of Sinope had brought unanimity and a new urgency into the demand for war. It also added a horrible significance to the resignation of Lord Palmerston. Probably Palmerston had decided to resign before the news of Sinope ever reached England; but to the public it was inconceivable that the two incidents were unconnected. *The Times*, prompted by the Government, stated that Palmerston's resignation had nothing to do with the Eastern Question and was due to his objections to Lord John's Bill. The *Morning Chronicle* and the *Globe* also showed Ministerial influence by giving Reform as the cause of his resignation, which, unlike *The Times*, they found a source of bewilderment and regret. But no one believed them.¹ The *Morning Post*, under the guidance of Palmerston himself, led the attack on this new proof of Governmental treachery. Lord Palmerston did not tell Mr. Borthwick that he had resigned on foreign policy; he left the *Morning Post* to draw the natural conclusion. On December 16th, he wrote to Mr. Borthwick:

'*The Times* of today asserts that I have left the Government because I am opposed to all measures of Parliamentary reform. I wish you would say in the *Post* that this is entirely untrue; that, on the contrary, I have been ready to agree to a very considerable measure of reform though I did not choose to be a party to proposing to Parliament measures of change which, in my opinion, went beyond the necessities of the time and which I thought inexpedient. You may add that it is equally untrue that my objections were not stated plainly and distinctly from the first moment when the measures to which they were related were proposed and discussed. State this, not from authority, but as what you have good reason to believe.'

¹ The *Manchester Guardian*, December 17th, 1853, came nearest to accepting *The Times* statement; no other paper even considered their explanation possible. It was clear that they scarcely believed themselves.

This was sufficient for Mr. Borthwick. The next morning the *Morning Post* announced that *The Times* was 'utterly false' in saying that Lord Palmerston was not a Reformer: that he was willing to accept a moderate Reform Bill and had, as a matter of fact, resigned on the Eastern Question. On the 19th, this was repeated with more vehemence, and, on the 20th, an editorial declared that the Cabinet would be helpless without Lord Palmerston, whose motives for resigning were clear in spite of officially inspired untruths in *The Times*. 'Everyone will judge for himself according to his estimate of the man.' On the 22nd, numerous letters and extracts from provincial papers were quoted showing that the public had judged—according to their estimate of the man. 'The English public,' the *Post* declared, 'knows the real reason why Palmerston has resigned.' It was the same cause which had driven him from office in 1851. It was due to an unseen power behind the Ministry—a '*rapprochement*' between the Courts of Vienna and England'.

The hunt was up. Every paper recalled the incident of Lord Palmerston's former dismissal: he had favoured France when the Crown wished to please the Tsar and the Austrian Emperor. A letter to the *Morning Post* led the way. It was intolerable that we should still allow this foreign influence in high places. Why did Englishmen tolerate 'the swarm of northern intriguers which luxuriates in our palaces and blocks up the ingress by which good old English truth and feeling, sometimes at least, might find its way to the throne'.

The *Daily News*, mindful of Palmerston's past inconsistency towards liberal movements, thought him too unprincipled to deserve wholehearted praise, but reminded its readers of his dismissal in 1851, and added that 'some of his admirers may even go so far as to hint that Courtly distastes and Coburg intrigues' were again responsible. To the *Morning Herald* it seemed that 'now, as it was two years ago, the exclusion of Lord Palmerston from the Cabinet is the work of foreign intrigue and that he is ejected for the express purpose of enabling our alliance with France to be severed'. The Tsar, in collaboration

with the Court and Ministry, had known that the British fleet would be allowed to take no part in aiding the Turk and had, therefore, indulged in the 'massacre' of Sinope. 'No Cabinet Council' had been convened and 'Palmerston, the one English Minister', refused to stand by and see a 'murder' committed before his eyes. It was, indeed, high time for 'Palmerston to come out from such a mess of infamy'.

Bell's Life was equally explicit. 'At last he [Palmerston] has done what becomes him, in spite even of Court influence: he has redeemed his character and regained his proper position.' The *Press*, too, was glad of Palmerston's resignation: it would mean the destruction of the Government. 'It is true,' wrote Disraeli, 'that the policy of Lord Palmerston has in the main been followed, but it has always been followed too late. . . .' What, then, would happen now that Palmerston had left the Cabinet? 'The tone of the Cabinet on foreign affairs, we are told, is not to be lowered and their energy is not to be relaxed. As for lowering the tone of the Cabinet—that we defy them to do. As to their energy, its evidences may be found in the Bay of Sinope.'

On December 25th, it began to be rumoured that Lord Palmerston was to return to the Cabinet. The news was confirmed next day. This was difficult for both parties. Delane, who had just learnt from Aberdeen that, though Reform had been Palmerston's ostensible ground for resigning, foreign policy had been the real ground, was naturally annoyed that he had insisted 'so strenuously that Palmerston resigned solely on account of Reform and that there was no difference on foreign policy'. It seemed to him now that 'Palmerston had acted a very high-minded and disinterested part' in not taking the Eastern Question as his ground of resignation. The attitude of *The Times* had exposed him to the most violent denunciation and now it seemed that this was only partly deserved. *The Times* and *Chronicle*, therefore, congratulated Palmerston on his willingness to return, and expressed satisfaction that the Reform difference was settled. Prince Albert, surveying the situation,

was gravely amused: 'The best of the joke is,' he wrote, 'that because he [Palmerston] went out, the Opposition journals extolled him to skies in order to damage the Ministry; and now the Ministerial journals have to do so in order to justify the reconciliation.'

The Opposition papers also found the situation awkward. They had declared that Palmerston had resigned in order to break away and expose a gang of traitors. And here was their hero calmly returning once more to join forces with his country's enemies! The only explanation possible was that he had returned, not because of a reconciliation, but because the Ministry had surrendered. Actually Palmerston had not asked or received a single concession from his colleagues. The *Morning Post*, therefore, in an obviously inspired leader, quoted, almost verbatim, Palmerston's letter to Aberdeen withdrawing his resignation. The Reform Bill was, it said, after all still open to discussion, and, more important, since the Government could not get on without him, Palmerston had gone back on the assurance that the coming war against Russia would be properly conducted. Other papers, not troubled with hints from Lord Palmerston himself, assumed that 'the Noble Viscount has obtained his own terms'; 'there was nothing left for it [the Ministry] to do but to eat the humblest pie: everything was conceded to Lord Palmerston would he only condescend to return'. The *Press* had, as usual, an unusual way of expressing the common opinion. On December 24th, it described the imaginary Cabinet meeting which had invited Lord Palmerston to return:

'Lord Aberdeen moved that it was very disagreeable weather. Carried Nem. Con. (with an addition by Mr. Gladstone that we ought to be very thankful to Providence that we had any weather at all). . . . Lord Aberdeen moved, Sir James Graham seconded, and it was carried by seven to four (Sir Charles Wood, by mistake, voting both ways) that a message be sent to Lord Palmerston offering to surrender everything if he would, by returning to office, save the Coalition Ministry from its inevitable doom.'



THE MINISTERIAL SPLIT.

Poland. "I'LL JUST FRIGHTEN THEM A LITTLE."

Punch: 31 December 1853

With Lord Palmerston's return to the Ministry it might have been expected that the national excitement would have decreased. Would not the suggestion of 'treachery in High Places' cease now that the supposed victim was reinstated?¹

The reverse was the case. The newspapers hungered after a scandal. The public was too deeply roused to be appeased thus easily. Everywhere it scented plots: every foreigner might be a Russian spy. Palmerston's return to office was only proof that the public had been right. Clearly he had been reinstated because the 'hidden power' was frightened by the voice of the people. But the people were not deceived: they would hunt down the traitor, drag him into the light, and deal with him according to his deserts. So it was that, after Palmerston's return, the hunt became more vigorous and the charges more definite. The newspapers which, in December, had raised the hue and cry upon 'Court influence' and 'foreign intrigue', in January were hot upon the trail of a 'certain illustrious personage', 'one occupying the Highest Place in the realm'; finally, they cast aside the last disguise and, with a shriek of triumph, fell upon their prey. The traitor was Prince Albert.

THE ATTACK ON PRINCE ALBERT

(December-January)

It was inevitable that the Prince Consort should be selected as the popular victim. The logic of the matter was simple and irrefutable; the circumstantial evidence perfect. The facts, as it happened, were illogical and the circumstantial evidence pointed to a wrong conclusion. But who could believe this? Albert, notoriously a foreigner, friendly to European Governments, whose hatred of Palmerston had often caused Englishmen pleasure, had been one of the principal agents in dismissing

¹ So Strachey assumed (*Queen Victoria*, p. 184). 'Within a few weeks Palmerston withdrew his resignation, and the public frenzy subsided as quickly as it had arisen.' This is incorrect. Palmerston was out of office for ten days (December 14th to 24th); the 'public frenzy' lasted until February and was at its height in January.

It was the meeting of Parliament, and the fact that war was obviously about to break out, that pacified the papers at the end of January.

him in 1851. Two years later, when the enemies of England were closing around her and the national fortunes seemed at their lowest, Palmerston, the one Minister whom the people trusted, was again removed from his place. The inference was irresistible: Albert had again interfered. Only those who had special knowledge of the facts could reject this explanation, and they were at a loss to offer another.

The fact that *The Times* gave a different account only made the conclusion the easier to accept. Everyone knew that *The Times* was the official instrument of the Government. The *Morning Post*, which all politicians and journalists knew to be under the influence of Lord Palmerston, had definitely denied the account given in *The Times* and stated that he was again the victim of Court intrigue. Palmerston, apparently, was willing to profit by this accusation, for the *Morning Post* statements had been categorical and seem not to have been corrected by him for more than a month.¹ It is probable that he was at length alarmed at the intensity of the attack and did not approve of its concentration on Prince Albert. On January 25th, therefore, he wrote to Mr. Borthwick:

‘I think it would be useful if you were to put into the *Post* the following paragraph:

‘We have observed that some of our contemporaries have endeavoured to connect the resignation of the Home Secretary with some proceedings on the part of the Court. Now we believe we may confidently affirm, without the slightest fear of contradiction, that the resignation of the noble Lord was the result of some misunderstanding between himself and some of his colleagues, and had not the remotest connection with anything on the part of the Court.’²

In any case Lord Palmerston was not responsible for the agitation against the Prince. An earlier disavowal in the *Morning*

¹ The M.P., however, made the statement only during the period that Palmerston was out of office, and did not mention Albert's name.

² Greville and others believed that Louis Napoleon, by arrangement with Palmerston and Walewski, managed and paid for the agitation against the Prince. He gives no sufficient evidence for such a supposition. Greville, vol. VII, p. 134. Reginald Lucas, *Lord Glenesk and the Morning Post*, p. 140.

Post would have made little difference. People believed that a foreign Prince who had interfered once had interfered again. This accounted for the popular frenzy. But in many ways the Prince was an easy mark, and his enemies made the best use of their opportunities. The 'Old Tories' disliked him: some of them had never forgiven his victory over them at the time of the Exhibition. He was unpopular in the Army and unpopular in Society. His un-English taste for metaphysics and scientific experiment, his German habit of thinking and speaking in 'categories', his clothes, his appearance—all were foreign and peculiar, and made it easy to believe evil of him. Strachey, indeed, has remarked that an important Constitutional question was really raised by his position as husband of the Queen—a position for which the Constitution made no provision. His theory of the power of the English Crown, as elaborated by Baron Stockmar, did indeed 'run counter to the whole development of English public life since the Revolution'. But he did not confine himself to theory; during Palmerston's third tenure of the Foreign Office he had gone far towards raising the 'English monarchy to a height of power, stability, and symmetry' which it had never attained, at any rate since the reign of George III.

Thus the agitation, beginning in the least respectable papers, was taken up in many unexpected quarters, and for a brief moment even *The Times* admitted that Albert's position was anomalous. The charges against the Prince were promiscuous and extensive. The *Morning Advertiser* led the attack; the *Daily News*, the *Morning Herald* and *Standard*, *Reynolds's Weekly*, and *Bell's Life* followed. An extensive pamphlet controversy arose, public meetings denounced the Prince, and 'halfpenny broadsides, hawked through the streets of London, re-echoed in doggerel vulgarity the same sentiments and the same suspicions'.

From the beginning, the *Morning Advertiser* and the *Morning Herald* declared that it was only owing to special efforts on the part of the Court that Albert's treachery had not been held up to ignominy two years before. Lord John Russell, said the

Herald, had dismissed Lord Palmerston in 1851 without telling Parliament that 'there was a third key to the dispatch box which conveyed the papers from the Minister to the Queen'. The *Morning Advertiser* offered to be more explicit. The editor possessed an incriminating pamphlet written from documents 'coming, as we know that a portion of them do come, either from a certain noble Lord himself, or from someone intimately acquainted with his affairs'. This pamphlet would show that the Prince was always in the room when Ministers were engaged in the most confidential discussions, that he enjoyed a special correspondence with Britain's representatives abroad, and was in constant and traitorous communication with foreign Courts. It would prove up to the hilt his collusion with Vienna: there had been rejoicing at the Austrian Court at Palmerston's dismissal before the news was announced even in England. It further added that the author of the pamphlet, Mr. William Coningham, had been offered a 'bribe of £100 and a cask of sherry', for its suppression. On January 19th, Mr. Coningham's article was printed in the *Morning Advertiser*; and *The Times*, by way of throwing ridicule on the accusations, also published it five days later.¹ It was found to contain undocumented insinuations that a plot against the Foreign Minister had been hatched between the English Court and Vienna, a panegyric of Lord Palmerston, and some unpleasant remarks about Lord John Russell. It further asked: 'What personage, however high, dares to usurp the authority of a Minister of State?'

This was enough proof of Albert's guilt. *Reynolds's Weekly* expressed itself satisfied. The foreign policy of this country was entirely ruled by foreigners. 'The Prince Prime Minister apparently thinks that none but Germans have the right or title to interfere in the government of this country.' In any case, said the *Daily News*, it was impossible for Prince Albert ever to become 'an English Liberal'. It was obvious that he was 'so nurtured and entangled with family connections that he should

¹ Lord Palmerston disclaimed all knowledge of Coningham's pamphlet in the *Morning Post*, 23/1/54.

be forced to abstain from all interference in English politics'. But there was further evidence. General Brown had recently retired from the Horse Guards under mysterious circumstances. And this just when the Guards were wanted against Russia! The Army was in danger; it was 'a scheme for laying England prostrate at the feet of German intriguers'. The 'shadow behind the throne' was creeping forward; Albert was but part of a wider conspiracy; 'the English representative of the Austro-Belgian, Coburg-Orleans clique', the 'avowed enemies of England and the subservient tools of Russian ambition'. 'There is a power sitting at the Privy Council board of England, not less fatal in its action because unseen. That power is believed to be the interpreter of Russian wishes and the abetter of Russian purposes.'

Writers of letters to the papers expressed themselves even more strongly. One correspondent found himself so outraged at the Prince's conduct that he seemed to regret that 'the English may not exhibit their resentment by the use of the knout which he [Prince Albert] has been so insidiously attempting to introduce into Europe with his friend the Tsar'.

The attack was first disregarded by the Court and the Ministry. But the Constitutional question was serious: was Albert to be defended as the *alter ego* of the Queen? Could it be that Albert did not in fact exist—was he indeed but part of the Queen's personality? Or was he, on the other hand, a Privy Councillor with special privileges? A number of pamphlets appeared defending the Prince. One of them declared that though Albert was vindicated, 'there has been un-English influence at work somewhere'. Lord Aberdeen must after all be the 'guilty person'. 'My Lord,' wrote 'Plain Speech', 'if you are a man, throw off your cloak that the people may be assured of the fact; if you are anything else, retire to Scotland and hide yourself from the public scorn in some impenetrable vale.' One or two other pamphleteers wrote on behalf of the Prince: one defined his position as Privy Councillor and, after quoting precedents, added that he could be censured or removed from

his position just as any other member of the Privy Council. But, as a matter of fact, the Prince Consort 'has become to all intents and purposes an Englishman'.

Charles Greville entered the lists with a reply to the *Herald* and a letter to *The Times*, and received a considerable share of abuse in the Tory papers. 'Mr. Greville,' wrote the *Morning Herald*, 'if he desires to retain the fruits of a jobbing age which has fortunately passed away, had better maintain a secluded silence.'

Prince Albert and the Queen bore the attack with admirable fortitude. Outwardly, at any rate, they were calm.¹ Only in the early morning, while Albert was writing memoranda on the Eastern situation, the Queen poured out her feelings to Lord Aberdeen. Her letters heavily, if somewhat promiscuously, underlined, show how deeply the scurrilous vulgarity of her subjects had affected her. She read every paper and pamphlet she could obtain, and was anxious to know the authorship of any written on the Prince's behalf. At the height of the onslaught she had thoughts of desperate measures and came near to refusing to open Parliament in person. On January 4th she wrote to the Premier:

'The Queen had hoped that the scandalous attacks which had appeared immediately after the resignation of Lord Palmerston against the Prince, in several (though none of the *most* respectable) papers would cease, and, indeed, *had* done so, but she has been mistaken; she perceives that a *systematic* and *most infamous* attack appears daily in the *Morning Herald* and *Standard*, and she, therefore, can no longer *doubt* that there is some design in *this*, which, as Lord Aberdeen will easily believe, she *DEEPLY resents*.'

She felt that the more serious charges should be met: Albert should be given a Constitutional position.

'Therefore, upon mature reflection, and after considering the question for nearly eleven years, I have come to the conclusion

¹ 'If our courage and cheerfulness have not suffered, our stomachs and digestions have, as they commonly do when feelings are kept long upon the stretch.' Prince Albert to Stockmar.

(and I know the Prince has also) that the *Title* which is now by *universal consent* given him of "*Prince Consort*" *with the highest rank in and out of Parliament*, IMMEDIATELY after the Queen, and before EVERY OTHER PRINCE of the Royal Family, should be the one assigned to the *HUSBAND* of the QUEEN REGNANT *once and for all*.'

Lord Aberdeen was sympathetic and believed that the attack would die down. *The Times*, at any rate, represented serious opinion and would take no part in the agitation. But Delane was not sufficiently cautious. In defending Prince Albert he admitted difficulties in the Prince Consort's Constitutional position.

This wrung another letter from the Queen, who complained that the Government had allowed even *The Times* to print a 'very injudicious article'. 'If the country,' she proceeded, '*really has* such incomprehensible and reprehensible notions there is no remedy but the introduction of the *Salic Law*, for which *she* would *heartily* vote. A *woman must have* a support and an adviser; and *who can* this *properly* be but her husband, *whose duty it is to watch over her interests private and public*. From this *sacred duty*, NO EARTHLY POWER can absolve him! Were it not for the Prince, the Queen's health and strength would long since have sunk under the multifarious duties of her position as Queen and the mother of a large family. Were the Queen to *believe* that these unprincipled and immoral insinuations really were those of *any* but a wicked and despicable few, she would LEAVE a position which nothing but her domestic happiness could make her endure, and retire to private life—leaving the country to choose another ruler after their own HEARTS' CONTENT. But she does *not* think so ill of her country, though she must say that these disgraceful exhibitions will leave behind them *very bitter* feelings in her breast, which time alone can eradicate!

'If the whole *is* brought before Parliament, which would be better but which seems almost doubtful now, the Queen hopes it will be on the first *night* of the Session, and done with.

'The Queen encloses an extract from her journal of the year 1841, giving *Lord Melbourne's* opinion of the Prince and his position; the Prince was only twenty-two then!'

Lord Aberdeen explained the position to Delane, who hastened to retrieve his error. On the 21st the Queen wrote:

'The Queen is very thankful to Lord Aberdeen for sending her the note from Mr. Delane, and for so kindly taking every opportunity of relieving the very painful impression on her by the *infamous* fabrications against herself and the Prince. They have wounded the Queen *deeply*, and she must say that she thinks such unfounded assertions really leave a blot on the fair fame of this country for good sense and loyalty which will not easily be wiped out. The *Globe* has had very good articles, and so has the *Illustrated London News*, which is a very widely circulated Paper. The Irish Provincial Papers have been particularly friendly on this occasion. The little Pamphlet is published by *Ridgeway*.¹

'The Queen has been *seriously* meditating *not* to open Parliament in person, as she did not wish, and *could not expose* herself to *some insult*, which she thought might possibly be offered to the Prince and herself on their procession through the streets to the House of Lords. If, on inquiry, Lord Aberdeen finds that there is no reason to fear this—the Queen *will* open Parliament in person.'

The Queen had reason to fear that the opening of Parliament would be unpleasant. The *Daily News* had asserted that Mr. Roebuck would lead an attack on the Prince in the House—an announcement which Mr. Roebuck himself vehemently denied. There was a terrible rumour that Sir Robert Peel would take his place: 'As he is half mad,' Lord Aberdeen wrote to the Queen, 'it is difficult to say what he may not do!'² Moreover, so feverish had the excitement grown that it was believed that

¹ On the 20th the Queen wrote: 'There is a very sensible little pamphlet entitled *Prince Albert*, which though not quite correct as to the *Peer's* audiences, is full of good sense and calculated to do great good. The Queen would like much to know *who* wrote it.'

² The son of the great Tory Prime Minister who had died in 1850.

Prince Albert (and some even added the Queen herself) had been incarcerated as traitors in the Tower. Under these circumstances it was not surprising that the Queen hesitated to appear in public.

In the latter part of January, however, the attacks on Prince Albert grew less. The Tory papers ceased to take part, and only the *Morning Advertiser*, whose circulation had been considerably increased by its attack upon the Prince, continued its stream of libellous accusations. The Queen consented, therefore, to open Parliament, and received her accustomed welcome 'though all the *enthusiasm* was bestowed on the Turkish Minister'. In the debate on the Address the Government boldly undertook the Prince's defence, and in both Lords and Commons the leaders of both parties concurred in expressing admiration for his abilities and confidence in his character. The question of Ministerial control of newspapers was debated with acrimony. Lord Derby accused the Premier of giving early and private information to *The Times*. Lord Aberdeen denied that *The Times* had received its information from the Cabinet and retorted with great effect upon the Tories by pointing out that the attacks on the Prince Consort had been virulently sustained in the Derbyite papers. This led to violent repudiations and counter-assaults by Disraeli, Lord Derby, and the Earl of Malmesbury. The only thing that emerged quite clearly from the debate was that no member of either House believed in the guilt of the Prince Consort. The Queen was more than satisfied: 'The position of my beloved Lord and Master,' she said, 'has been defined once and for all.' This, however, was exactly the reverse of the fact. All were agreed that the Prince was an excellent husband: possibly he might be considered a royal private secretary; certainly he was a legal Privy Councillor. Beyond that, however, it was deemed well, according to the best traditions of the British Constitution, to leave definition in a convenient obscurity.

The Eve of War
(January–March 1854)

SELF-PERSUASION AND SELF-REPROACH

AFTER the engagement of Sinope and the Cabinet decision to demand the withdrawal of Russian ships from the Black Sea, the final negotiations at Vienna were not likely to receive serious consideration in England. The publication of the Tsar's conversation with Sir George Seymour, anticipating the decease of the 'sick man of Europe', was everywhere received as proof that Russia had long been preparing for the war.¹ The Earl of Shaftesbury told the House of Lords that it was his 'deliberate conviction that this was a long-conceived and gigantic scheme, determined on years ago, and now to be executed, for the prevention of all religious freedom, and so ultimately of all civil freedom, among millions of mankind'. The secret protocol of 1844, in which the Duke of Wellington, among others, had agreed that the Ottoman Empire could not long be preserved, was not generally known, but if it had appeared in every newspaper few would have believed in its authenticity. For the air was already charged with the preparations for war. The departure of the Guards in February was a 'touching and beautiful sight', which made serious thoughts of peace impossible.² 'At last we are fairly in the field of battle,' wrote

¹ Cp. the popular song:

'And did he say the Turk was sick
And that the Turk should die?
There's 50,000 Englishmen
Will know the reason why!'

War Verses

² Queen Victoria's *Letters*, III, p. 17. Vide Hansard, CXXX, p. 1222 ff., and especially Lord Beaumont's speech on the departure of the Guards. On the 27th, Charles Kingsley wrote: 'The Guards march tomorrow! How it makes one's blood boil!'

Walter Savage Landor; 'no more flirting with Bellona, no more pouring out rose-water on the moustache of Mars.'

The Cabinet succumbed to the excitement. Its members did not share the popular view either of Turkey's heroic behaviour or of Russia's satanic wickedness, but their action in sending the ultimatum to the Tsar without Austria's promise of support shows that diplomatic caution had deserted them. For months they had been negotiating with the primary object of securing Austria's aid without which they could not drive the Tsar's troops from the Principalities; but so eager were they now to terminate negotiations that they seem even to have wished to send the ultimatum before any answer had been received from Austria. Aberdeen, in a letter to the Queen, admitted that he alone opposed this premature step. 'No answer,' he wrote, 'has yet been received [from Austria] and Lord Aberdeen would think it right not to make the summons until Austria has declared her intention; but the Cabinet appears to desire that the letter should be sent tomorrow evening.' How right Aberdeen was about the crucial importance of Austria as an ally was conclusively shown less than two months after the outbreak of war, when the Tsar withdrew his troops from the Principalities in deference to Vienna's request. But by that time the allies had found other reasons for fighting and the war went on.

What considerations had arisen to necessitate such a decision? No diplomatic deadlock had occurred. But Parliament was all impatience, and even the peaceful section of the Cabinet had come to share that impatience. Curiously enough, the reasons they gave to justify a declaration of war were widely various.

Lord Clarendon and Sir James Graham considered that war was inevitable. England was hopelessly committed in any case. It was impossible to withdraw without disgrace. We had, Lord Clarendon admitted, 'drifted into war', but since we had gone so far it was best to put a bold front upon it. He was weary of negotiations and thought that the Tsar had probably made up his mind to war sooner or later. He was anxious, however, to

feel that we had not in any way precipitated hostilities. To Sir James Graham he wrote:

'I have a bellicose letter from Lord John, assuming that the terms of the Porte are what we know them to be, and proposing that the Emperor shall only have seven days for accepting or refusing them. J. R. secretes something of this kind daily now: however, for my part, I am getting in *favour of war*. Of course a patch-up would be the least troublesome thing now: but I believe it would only be playing the Emperor's game and allowing him to make monster preparations for monster objects.' And Sir James, now sure that negotiations would fail, busied himself in equipping the fleet and wrote: 'I do not think peace is any longer possible. The Emperor must fight; and if he pockets our hostile message to Sevastopol, we must send our ultimatum to St. Petersburg.'

Sidney Herbert desired to hasten the ultimatum for quite a different reason. He began at last to share the popular view that Russia would seize Constantinople before we were ready to protect it.¹

'The important point of this opinion,' he wrote, 'is that which refers to the question of time. Whoever gets the position first will hold it. If once Russia reaches it and captures it all the combined forces could do would be to blockade her from the Mediterranean. Everything must depend on the rapidity with which the troops of France and England can be carried to the scene of action. . . . There is great risk that when our troops arrive at the Dardanelles they may find themselves too late.'

The Duke of Argyll remained pacific until the last moment. In the *Edinburgh Review* of July 1854 he described the negotiations and gave the reasons for his final conversion to a war policy. The justification for our ultimatum, he said, was that the Tsar had refused the allied terms which reached him at the same time as the demand that he should evacuate the Black Sea. He further complained that the Tsar laid it down as a condition

¹ Stanmore, *Herbert*, I, p. 221. He seems to have been converted to this view by reading the *Voyage de Marmont, duc de Raguse*, trans. 1854. Marshal Marmont had been greatly impressed with the strength of the new fortifications of Constantinople.

that he should conduct the final negotiations directly with Turkey.

'Not only,' he writes, 'did he spurn the proffered terms of peace, but as if on purpose to set at ease the most peaceful amongst us, he asserted roundly the very doctrine of his own exclusive right to deal with Turkey as he pleased, which we were all united in resisting, and which in principle he had himself repudiated in signing the Treaty of 1840. This was the only issue which justified, in my opinion, a war, nominally in defence of the Turk, but really a war in defence of the right of Europe to keep the fate of Turkey as a matter of common interest and concern.'

The condition laid down by the Tsar that, after all, the questions at issue should have been decided by the Four Powers, the actual terms of his treaty with Turkey should be the subject of direct negotiation with the Sultan, has here become 'the right to deal with Turkey as he pleased'. It had 'set at ease the most peaceful of us'. But he had forgotten Mr. Gladstone.

What was it that set Mr. Gladstone at ease with himself? Mr. Gladstone's conscience was a difficult one to satisfy. It was the knowledge of this that made his decision in favour of war so important. 'None but a bold man,' wrote Kinglake, 'could say that the war was needless or wicked whilst Mr. Gladstone was feeding it with his own hand.'

Mr. Gladstone himself always denied that the Cabinet 'drifted into the war'. Was he not a member of it? 'As a member of the Aberdeen Cabinet,' he told Lord Morley in 1881, 'I never can admit that divided opinions in that Cabinet led to hesitating action or brought on the war.' But on February 22, 1854, in conversation with Lord Aberdeen, who could not reconcile himself to war, Mr. Gladstone gave some hint of his state of mind before the ultimatum.

'He [Lord Aberdeen] asked: "How could he bring himself to fight for the Turks?" I said we were not fighting for the Turks, but we were warning Russia off forbidden ground. . . . He said if I saw a way to get him out, he hoped I would mention it to

him. I replied that my own views of war so much agreed with his, and I felt such a horror of bloodshed, that I thought the matter over incessantly myself. We stand, I said, upon the ground that the Emperor has invaded countries not his own, inflicted wrong on Turkey, and what I feel much more, most cruel wrong on the wretched inhabitants of the Principalities: that war had ensued and was raging with all its horrors; we had procured for the Emperor an offer of honourable terms of peace which he had refused: that we were not going to extend the conflagration (but I had to correct myself as to the Baltic), but to apply more power for its extinction, and this I hoped in conjunction with all the great Powers of Europe.'

These seemed good reasons, and yet Mr. Gladstone was haunted by a remaining doubt. What if fighting against Russia should involve us in hostilities with other enemies of the Sultan? What if the Christian subjects of the Sultan revolted? Mr. Gladstone's conscience could stand it no longer. If this should happen he would refuse to support the war. 'I, for one, could never shoulder the musket against the Christian subjects of the Sultan and must there take my stand.'¹ As it turned out, the muskets were shouldered by those who felt the difficulties of the situation less acutely than Mr. Gladstone.

Lord Aberdeen remained unconvinced even after this conversation. He stood alone, without comfort, and spoke his mind with a kind of bitter courage, which did not hide his self-reproach. Desperately clinging to the hope that the mission of Count Orloff at Vienna would succeed, he was met with derision and abuse even amongst his own colleagues.

'George,' wrote Lady Clarendon in her journal, 'told him he was humbugging the country by giving it hopes of peace for which there was no real hope, and that if Lord A. did not modify what he had said by informing the House that negotiations

¹ The *Guardian*, which was representative of Mr. Gladstone's religious views, said, on December 21st, that we must always side with the oppressed against the strong and aggressive, but that if the question of helping Turkey against her Christian subjects arose it would be difficult to know what to do. The only solution was to help Turkey now and reform her as the price of our aid.

were now over he would get up and say so himself; to which Lord A. said, "No, no; I will do it," which he did. The appearance of vacillation produced an unpleasant laugh in the House.¹ But though he might vacillate about the hopefulness of negotiation in which the Cabinet was not taking a direct part, his feeling about the war was stated with an openness which led to a noble Lord's declaration that 'it was no smiling matter when the same doctrines were preached by the head of the Government that were held up by that little club of ridiculous people [the Peace Society]'. 'The people of this country,' Lord Aberdeen had declared, 'are not sufficiently impressed with the importance and magnitude of the war in which they may be engaged. . . . In fact, we have been so long without having experienced the horrors and miseries of war that it is but too common to look upon it now as a source of pleasurable excitement: and I verily believe that, if by the blessing of God and our endeavours, we should still be enabled to preserve peace, a very great disappointment will ensue in some quarters. I agree in thinking the public feeling in this matter is a generous feeling . . . but, my Lords, it is not for us to encourage that feeling. It is, on the contrary, the duty of the Government as much as possible to resist such feelings, however natural and generous they may be—to direct them in the course of prudence and of policy. . . . The noble Earl has been pleased to say that I have been more a War Minister than I intended or fancied that I should be. In saying so, he has perhaps spoken more truth than he intended: for I can assure him that if I have any misgivings about the course which has been pursued it is certainly not that we have been too pacific.'

Conscious of the fact that he was obeying and not leading the people he yet remained in office, struggling for peace and feeling that it would be dishonourable to resign. On February

¹ Bright, in his journal, records that he had a conversation with Aberdeen and Granville on February 8th. Both still hoped for peace and agreed that Russia was only seeking 'influence', and that Turkey had deliberately brought on the war in the knowledge that England and France were committed to her support. Trevelyan, G.M., p. 230.

22nd, he suggested to Mr. Gladstone that 'he might himself withdraw from office when he came to the declaration of war. All along he had been acting against his feelings, but still defensively. He did not think that he could regard the offensive in the same light and was disposed to retire. . . . All wars were called, or pretended to be, defensive.' The events of the last year had become a nightmare to him. Who was to blame? Had there not been some moment in the negotiations when more loyalty on the part of his colleagues or, more terrible to believe, more firmness on his own part, would have prevented this unspeakable calamity?

'I believe,' he wrote to Lord John in March, 'that there were, in the course of the negotiations, two or three occasions when, if I had been supported, peace might have been honourably and advantageously secured. I will especially refer to the opportunity afforded by the transaction which took place at the meeting of the Emperors at Olmütz. But I repeat that the want of support, although it may palliate, cannot altogether justify to my own conscience the course which I pursued.'

And again he wrote:

'The abstract justice of the cause, although indisputable, is but a poor consolation for the inevitable calamities of all war, or for a decision which I am not without fear may prove to have been impolitic and unwise. My conscience upbraids me the more because, seeing as I did from the first all that was to be apprehended, it is possible that, by a little more energy and vigour, not on the Danube, but in Downing Street, it might have been prevented.'

As time passed the burden of responsibility grew no less. Haunted by a vision of the reality of war, he told Bright in March that 'his grief was such that he felt as if every drop of blood that would be shed would rest upon his head'. And, more than a year later, when the tale of tragedy in the Crimea had surpassed his most terrible foreboding, he could find no peace in the thought that time after time he had meant to be firm, had sought a place to 'dig his toes in', had at least tried

THE TRIUMPH OF LORD PALMERSTON

to serve his country. Events had been too big for him. But people, he said, are not to be forgiven on the ground of good intentions, and he himself, who had meant well, was 'the greatest culprit of all'.

A REPRESENTATIVE PARLIAMENT

The Cabinet declared war without enthusiasm. It was an evil which they could no longer avoid and which at best could be justified on the ground that the balance of power necessitated defence of Turkey. Diplomatic methods would have been sufficient had not public opinion driven the Ministry into a false position from which a variety of accidents had prevented their escape. At any rate they had the consolation offered them by the *Westminster Review*: 'While the nation and Parliament are shortsighted, responsible Ministers cannot afford to be long-sighted.'

In the country there were many individuals who, like the pacific majority in the Cabinet, considered the war an evil which might have been avoided. They expressed this opinion in private conversation and in letters to friends, but beyond that they were silent. Delane, now urging hostilities in *The Times*, privately agreed with Bright that the war was 'unnecessary', and Mr. Walter admitted that *The Times* had been 'browbeaten into support of the war'. 'He said,' wrote Bright after their conversation, 'when a country would go for war, it was not worth while to oppose it, hurting themselves and doing no good.' There were others in less responsible positions who, through unusual knowledge or a critical turn of mind, refused to accept the popular view. They felt with Mr. Walter that it was not worth while hurting themselves by opposing war which they could not prevent. Lord Macaulay, who had, in the past, been a vigorous supporter of Palmerston, was present at a debate in which Bright protested, not only against the war, but also against the flippant and lighthearted way in which Palmerston, Graham, and Molesworth had spoken of it at a

farewell dinner to Sir Charles Napier. He wrote: 'I heard Bright say everything that I thought, and heard Palmerston and Graham expose themselves lamentably. Palmerston's want of temper, judgment, and good breeding was almost incredible. I came home quite dispirited.'¹ Sir George Cornwall Lewis, at this time editing the *Edinburgh Review*, wrote: 'I think both parties are in the wrong, Russia in making unjust demands, Turkey in resisting a reasonable settlement. My own belief is that England has little or nothing to fear from a Russian occupation of Constantinople, but this is a heresy which it is scarcely safe to utter.' So the *Edinburgh Review* decided that the Tsar only was to blame, and heresy was left to the Quakers. Mr. Monckton Milnes, too, suffered from the discomfort of knowing too much. 'I heartily wish that I had never seen anything of the East,' he wrote to Justin Macarthy, 'then I might have formed the clear, decisive, intelligible opinion on one side or the other which politicians and newspapers are enabled to do by reason of their ignorance; but I am really thankful as it is that my opinions on the subject have not the slightest weight in the the balance.'

The bustle of war penetrated even the 'soundproof room' in Cheyne Walk, where Thomas Carlyle, labouring at the first volume of *Frederick the Great*, made a characteristic note in his diary: 'Russian war: soldiers marching off, etc. Never such enthusiasm among the population. Cold, I, as a very stone to all that: seems to me privately I have hardly seen a madder business. . . . A lazy, ugly, sensual, dark fanatic that Turk, whom we have now had for 400 years. I, for my part, would not buy the continuance of him there at the rate of sixpence a century. . . . It is the idle population of editors, etc., that have done all this in England. One perceives clearly the Ministers go forward in it against their will. Indeed, I have seen no

¹ Palmerston was called to order for speaking of Bright as the 'honourable and "reverend" member'. For the dinner in honour of Sir Charles Napier at the Reform Club, vide Ashley, vol. II, pp. 55-9. Ashley explains that 'it was the common-sense view of patriotism to neglect no means, however trifling, of keeping up the heart and spirit of the nation'.

rational person who is not privately very much inclined to be of my opinion: all fools and loose-spoken inexperienced persons being of the other opinions. Poor Souls! What could the Ministry *do* after all?"

And what could he do? Struggle still more valiantly with the 'stupefying chaos' of the eighteenth century, lest he, too, should share the madness of the world.

A number of individuals, then, refused to accept the popular image of the Eastern situation, but there was no political group which opposed the war. Even the Peace Society had given way. Most of its members were either dumb or apologetic. Only the Society of Friends continued to work for peace, and in January, in despair of influencing opinion at home, a deputation of Quakers was sent to Russia. They were received with courtesy by the Tsar and with patriotic opprobrium at home. But neither the Tsar nor the British public seem to have been greatly influenced by what *The Times* called, 'this piece of enthusiastic folly'.¹

Parliament presented a curious spectacle. The divisions of the Don Pacifico debate had disappeared. In the Lords, only Earl Grey protested against the abandonment of England's policy of non-intervention for one of 'knight-errantry' on behalf of Turkey. In the Commons, Cobden spoke vigorously against the war, and Bright opposed it with all the power of sincere and eloquent passion. The Derbyites had hoped to defeat the Government at the opening of the session and Disraeli was 'furious' with the war because it had saved the Administration. The Tories, therefore, attacked the Government for having made an unnecessary 'Coalition war', and then abused it because, having rendered war inevitable, it still strove for peace. Finally, they offered their wholehearted co-operation in the coming struggle.

Whigs and Tories, then, were united in demanding immediate

¹ The deputation consisted of Sturge, Pease, and Charleton. They were afterwards accused in many quarters of causing the war by encouraging the Tsar to think that England would not fight. Henry Richard, *op. cit.*, pp. 464-80; cp. Kinglake, vol. II, p. 53.

war with Russia. But there was no agreement as to its justification or its objects. Some declared that the war would never have come had there been a firm policy in the Cabinet: others believed that Russia had determined to go to war in any case and had been preparing the war ever since the time of Peter the Great. One speaker began his speech by saying that 'the Government had shown no reason why the people of England should go to war', went on to declare that we were 'about to enter upon a religious war' for the Holy Places 'led by that author of all mischief, the Pope,' and ended by demanding that England should 'strike a blow at the heart of Russia and proclaim the re-establishment of the Kingdom of Poland'. Other members variously claimed that the war was to avenge the massacre of Sinope; to preserve the balance of power, the independence and integrity of the Sublime Porte, the rights and the freedom of the Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire; to give liberty to the democracies of Hungary and Poland; to secure the freedom of the Straits, the honour of the British Empire, the triumph of might against right, and of civilization against barbarism.

These ideas sprang naturally to the minds of those who saw before them the popular image of Russia's aggression, Turkey's heroism, and Palmerston's leadership. Facts seemed annoying and unnecessary. 'What they [the people] know and see,' said one speaker, 'is that there is a big fellow bullying a little one and that the little one is making a brave fight of it—and they are all for the little one. And that is very good and right; but it has nothing to do with the question of the justice of the origin of the war.'¹ Under these circumstances it was, in Sir James Graham's phrase, unnecessary to 'potter over blue books'. Exact reasons for the war were irrelevant: the country demanded leadership

¹ Prince Albert's diagnosis was similar. 'The Government,' he explained to the King of the Belgians, 'is a popular Government, and the masses upon which it rests only feel, and do not think. In the present instance their feeling is something of this sort: "The Emperor of Russia is a tyrant, and the enemy of all liberty on the Continent, the oppressor of Poland. He wanted to coerce the poor Turk. The Turk is a fine fellow; he has braved the rascal, let us rush to his assistance."' Quoted *Cont. Hist.*, vol. 11, p. 374.

against a bully. 'Wherever I go,' said Lord Dudley Stuart, 'I have heard but one opinion on the subject, and that one opinion has been pronounced in a single word, or in a single name—Palmerston.'

Lord Palmerston himself was ready to lead. The war he declared was to be fought for European liberty.

'Russia, bestriding the Continent from north to south, would become dangerous to the liberties of Europe, and her power would be fatal to the independence of other States. It is a noble sight to see England and France, two countries which for centuries have been in rivalry with each other, now united in a common course of action—bound by reciprocal engagements, and having in view as the result of their operations no selfish advantage—not armed for the purpose of conquest; not for the oppression of mankind but in a noble cause to defend right against might, and justice against oppression.'

Other speakers were no less certain. 'The feeling prevails among men of all classes,' said another speaker, 'not arising from what my Hon. Friend the Member for Manchester has termed the innate bellicose spirit of Englishmen, but from far higher and nobler feelings, the conviction that we are about to be engaged in a great struggle in support of right against wrong and for the maintenance of principles upon which our material interests, as well as the cause of civilization and liberty itself, may depend.' Why hesitate further? 'Surely,' cried Bulwer Lytton, 'if there ever was a war waged on behalf of posterity it is the war which would check the ambition of Russia, and preserve Europe from the outlet of barbarian tribes that require but the haven of the Bosphorus to menace the liberty and the civilization of races as yet unborn . . . a war fought, not for our own generation, but that the liberties of our children may be secured from some future Attila and civilization guarded from the irruptions of Scythian hordes.'

Parliament, notoriously a representative body, was voicing the opinions expressed in pamphlets, verses, letters, and newspapers throughout the country. The forces of barbarism were led by the Tsar and his Scythian hordes: the forces of civilization by Palmerston and the troops of Turkey, England, and France.¹ The picture of the Tsar as the incarnation of evil at the head of the hosts of darkness was every day more vividly portrayed: terrible descriptions of the punishment of the knout and accounts of cruelties committed by Cossacks on the inhabitants of the Principalities appeared daily in the papers. When the war had actually begun, rumours of Russian atrocities in the Crimea added a new horror to the picture. British soldiers became crusaders fighting with powers more than human. One writer describes the onslaught of the Russian Army: 'Then comes the horrid image of a secret, stealthy, creeping mass, slowly dragging its enormous bulk like some reptile, towards that noble, that devoted band of paladins.'²

Russia, though terrible, seemed easy to defeat. 'Charley Napier' would soon finish off the Tsar: everyone knew that Russians could not fight.³ In a contest between good and evil who could doubt that victory would be speedy? 'Cordially united with France,' said a writer in the *Quarterly*, 'and engaged in a righteous contest, we have little to dread from a Power which has added to the other elements of its weakness by the injustice of its cause.' But mere defeat of the Tsar was insufficient: the war was one to free Europe. For this purpose would it not be better to declare war on Austria too? Kossuth was touring the country, keeping fresh the memory of Austrian and Russian intervention in 1849 and reiterating that now was

¹ One pamphleteer asks: 'Does it follow, then, that because Russia is the champion of Evil, Turkey is the representative of the principle of Good?'—a question he seems unable to answer. *The Powers of Europe and the World's Great Quarrel*.

² *A Knouting for the Tsar. Words on the battles of Inkerman, Balaclava, and Alma*, by a Soldier, 1855.

³ Cp. *Hurrah for Old England and Charley Napier*, by T. Pearce, and accounts in all the papers of the farewell banquet to Sir Charles Napier, March 12th, 1854.

the time to give the help that we failed to offer then. 'The war,' he declared in July, 'is a logical necessity. In vain Cabinet diplomacy strains every nerve to tear from the lips of oppressed nations the ripe fruit of long-cherished hopes. The force of events will baffle their tricks.' Poland, Hungary, and Italy would now attain their freedom. 'You failed,' he told his English audiences, 'to aid Hungary when the Tsar first struck down her young Republic, and now you have to pay for it with your blood in streams and your money by millions.' Could we think of obtaining an alliance with Austria in a war to crush Russia? The answer was clear: 'Crush both' came from every part of the crowd.¹ Exactly how this was to be done was for the most part undecided. But Russia must be permanently crippled. Details were supplied by pamphleteers. 'The object of the present war,' one wrote, 'is the establishment of the peace and security of Europe on a solid and permanent foundation.' The allies must 'reduce the material power of Russia in such a manner as to preclude the possibility of her continuing schemes

¹ Kossuth's speech on June 5th, 1854. Cp. also *D.N.*, February 2nd, 1854—article on the danger of ruining the war for Poland, Hungary, and Italy if an alliance was made with Austria. The broadside, *Lovely Albert!* (three verses of which are quoted, Strachey, *Queen Victoria*, pp. 177-8) illustrates the assumption that war with Russia must also involve hostility to all German-speaking races.

Bad luck they say, both night and day
To the Coburgs and the humbugs,
The Witermbugs and Scarembugs,
And all the German horserugs:
And the old bug of Aberdeen,
The Peterbugs and Prussians,
May Providence protect the Turks,
And massacre the Russians.

Let France and England go to work,
Shun Austrians and Prussians,
Assist the poor and injured Turks,
And smother all the Russians;
Chain up the bear and make him stare,
And so keep my Davy,
We'll sing Old England three times three,
The Army and the Navy.

Chorus

I will tell thee AL, we never shall,
Although you played the deuce then,
Allow the Turks to be run down
By the dirty, greasy Russians.



SAINT NICHOLAS OF RUSSIA.

Punch: 18 March 1854

of aggrandizement'; much of her territory—the Crimea, Bessarabia, and Finland—was wrongfully acquired and must be taken away. Above all, Poland must again become an independent kingdom. Would not the Duke of Cambridge be the 'most desirable personage to fill the throne of Poland?' A 'large indemnity' was to be extracted from Russia, and the allies were to see that her Government was reformed and her administrative system overhauled.¹

While this vivid picture of a struggle for liberty prevailed, all arguments against the war necessarily seemed cowardly. It became a common method of displaying patriotism to write letters to the papers or publish pamphlets denouncing the 'peacemongers.' Neither Bright nor Cobden had shrunk from stating their opinions. Bright's position, stated in the House of Commons before the declaration of war, was summarized in his letter to Mr. Absalom Watkin and printed in *The Times* of November 3rd, 1854. He opposed the war on three main grounds.² The first was that after the Vienna Note the allies had had no further obligation to support Turkey. We were fighting for a country which had refused our mediation against a country which had accepted our terms. 'At this moment *England is engaged in a murderous warfare with Russia, although the Russian Government accepted her own terms of peace* and has been willing to accept them in the sense of England's own interpretation of them since they were offered: and at the same time England is allied *with Turkey, whose Government rejected the award of England, and who entered into the war in opposition to the advice of England.* Surely, when the Vienna Note was accepted by Russia, the Turks should have been prevented from going to war, or should have been allowed to go to war at their own risk.'

In the second place he argued that if we were to intervene at all in the East it should be in favour of Russia, however bad her Government, rather than for Turkey, the horror of whose administration could not be surpassed. 'We are not only at war

¹ Krasinski, a Polish refugee in England.

² Bright never opposed the Crimean War on the Quaker ground that war is wrong under all circumstances.



"RIGHT AGAINST WRONG."

Punch: 8 April 1854

with Russia, but with all the Christian population of the Turkish Empire, and we are building up our Eastern policy on a false foundation—namely, on the perpetual maintenance of the most immoral and filthy of all despotisms, over one of the fairest portions of the earth, which it has desolated, and over a population it has degraded but has not been able to destroy. . . . The danger of Russian power was a phantom; the necessity of permanently upholding the Mahometan rule in Europe an absurdity. Our love for civilization, when we subject the Greeks and Christians to the Turks, is a sham; and our sacrifices for freedom when working out the behests of the Emperor of the French and coaxing Austria to help us is a pitiful imposture.

‘The evils of non-intervention were remote and vague, and could neither be weighed nor described in any accurate terms. The good we can judge something of already by estimating the cost of a contrary policy. And what is the cost? War in the north [Baltic] and south of Europe, threatening to involve every country of Europe. Money, perhaps fifty millions sterling in the course of expenditure by this country alone, to be raised from the taxes of people whose extrication from ignorance and poverty can only be hoped for from the continuance of peace. The disturbance of trade throughout the world, the derangement of monetary affairs, and difficulties and ruin to thousands of families. Another year of high prices of food, notwithstanding a full harvest in England, chiefly because war interferes with imports, and we have declared our principal food-growers to be our enemies. The loss of life to an enormous extent. Many thousands of our own countrymen have already perished of pestilence in the field and hundreds, perhaps thousands, of English families will be plunged into sorrow, as a part of the penalty to be paid for the folly of the nation and its rulers.

‘When the time comes for the “inquisition of blood”, who shall answer for these things? You have read the tidings from the Crimea; you have perhaps shuddered at the slaughter; you remember the terrific picture—I speak not of the battle and of

the charge and the tumultuous excitement of the conflict, but of the field after the battle—Russians in their frenzy or their terror shooting Englishmen who would have offered them water to quench their agony of thirst; Englishmen, in crowds, rifling the pockets of the men they had slain or wounded, taking their few shillings or roubles, and discovering among the plunder of the stiffening corpses images of the "Virgin and the Child". You have read this and your imagination has followed the fearful details. This is war—every crime human nature can commit or imagine, every horror it can perpetrate or suffer; and this it is which our Christian Government recklessly plunges into, and which so many of our countrymen at this minute think it patriotic to applaud.¹

In the winter that followed, when *The Times* was day by day pouring out its terrible story of disease, misery, and incompetence in the Crimea, when it had become obvious that the war would not benefit Poland or Hungary, and that Russia was as capable of dull resistance to the invader as she had been in the days of Napoleon, the words of Bright were here and there recalled.¹ But for the moment every argument that Bright used was instinctively adapted to the popular image and became an argument for more active hostilities.

In the first place, his opponents retorted, the Vienna Note ought never to have been offered to Turkey. Only a weak or treacherous Government would have 'played the Tsar's game' by offering him terms that he was willing to accept. His immediate compliance with the terms proved that they suited his purpose in dismembering Turkey. Bright's second argument seemed at first more forcible. Turkish rule of Christian minorities had long troubled religious persons. Now, however, when they

¹ A number of pamphlets of 1855 confess agreement with Bright and occasionally even conversion by him. In the early part of 1854 I have seen only two pamphlets against the war, one being written by a Russian. For examples of the effect of Bright's argument when facts had broken down the picture of 1854: *Diplomatic Mystifications and Popular Credulity*, 1855; *War Unmasked*, by an ex-M.P.; *History of the Origin of the War with Russia*, 1855; *Is the War Just? Letter to Rt. Hon. Viscount Palmerston*, 1855; *Inquiry into the Alleged Justice and Necessity of the War with Russia*, by a Land-owner, 1855. Against the war in 1854 is: *A Word to the British Public; An Appeal on the Eastern Question*, by a Russian.

felt that the war was for civilization, it was also clear that in some way or other it must be for Christianity. In the first place, since Turkey was said to be tolerant and Russia notoriously oppressed all forms of Christianity except her own, the war was for the benefit of Christians. We were, therefore, said the *Quarterly Review*, in March 1854, 'fighting not for Islam but for Christianity'. Moreover, the war was a war for justice. 'Justice,' said Mr. Langford in an answer to John Bright, 'is another word for Christianity; therefore we are fighting for Christianity.' But there were more profound arguments than this. Religious teachers of many shades of faith declared that the war was sent by God and would call forth the slumbering virtue in men who were enervated by the effeminate habits of peace. The nations of the world, said one writer, have been unwilling to engage in this war, 'yet God as Judge is standing at the door of battle and they go in against their wills'. Our sin had necessitated the war. Yet 'every war is a war of principles' and God had chosen to make our punishment the instrument of his Providence. Victory was certain, for God and the allied troops were acting together. 'In a religious point of view the means and agencies now employed with such others as may reasonably be expected to spring up out of an advancing state of things, combined with the official agency of the Holy Ghost, seem to me amply sufficient for affecting a great and glorious change in the present evil world.'

A further hope arose. Could it be that the battle with the evil power of Russia was the final struggle destined by Divine prophecy to take place before the Second Coming? The Rev. Archibald Boyd told the Church of England Reading Association that he found many signs that this was the case. Did we not know that 'the drying up of the Euphrates' was to be the conclusion of a great prophetic period? Was Turkey perhaps destined to be the last great convert to Christ before the final catastrophe?

'Possibly, in the convulsions which changes so momentous and so pregnant with strife must produce, there will be found

the commencement of that state of universal disturbance which is to herald and introduce the advent of the Son of Man.' Mr. Boyd, however, was a little doubtful; it would be safer at present to preserve the Ottoman Empire by the usual methods until we knew more certainly that worldly efforts were no longer necessary. The Vicar of Kenilworth believed that the last trump would follow the last British victory. 'It may be,' he said, 'in the Providence of God, as I firmly believe, that our beloved country is destined to be a great instrument in preparing the world for that unspeakably glorious event.'

More cautious ministers of many shades of faith, who did not identify the Crimean War with Armageddon, vehemently controverted Bright's view that war was harmful to the national character. Among the less orthodox Christians, James Martineau declared that England must accept the war as a sacred trust to vindicate 'the common and universal law of God', which had 'been offended', and would be delayed by the advance of Russian despotism. Dr. Dale of Birmingham rejoiced that the nation had shown itself capable of sacrifice for unselfish ends, that we were fighting on behalf of Hungary and Poland, and not to extend our commerce or territory, but for the sake of justice, mercy, and truth. Such a war would bring forth 'the most heroic and Christian virtues' in every citizen.

In the Anglican Church the same assurance prevailed. At first, it is true, Charles Kingsley and Frederick Denison Maurice found the war puzzling. Both, however, quickly learnt to see in it the guiding hand of God and to realize that 'awful as war is' its results were 'more good than evil'. Kingsley felt that it was his task to help the English soldier to realize that he was 'fighting on God's side', and wrote a pamphlet entitled *Brave Words to Brave Soldiers* to emphasize this aspect of the war. He said: 'A soldier wants a military and corporate and national religion, and that is what I fear he has yet to get and what I tried to give him in my tract. That is what Cromwell's Ironsides had, and by it they conquered. This is what the Elizabethans had up to the Armada, and by it they conquered.' During the

first year of the war he set himself to portray the religion of the Elizabethans in *Westward Ho!* and, with an ingenuous sincerity which schoolboys have always found delightful, contrived to endow the teaching of the Gospels with something of his own adventurous spirit. Maurice wrote, congratulating him on the idea of his Elizabethan novel, but reminding him that in his preaching, too, he must supply the 'burning fire' of which the Church stood in need.

'I do hope something from the war,' he wrote, 'chiefly as a sign of what God is doing. It is more like the commencement of a battle between God in His Absoluteness and the Tsar in his than 1848 was, though that might take a more agreeable and popular form. I begin to understand a little better why our sympathies with Greece and even Italy were so violently stifled. Something better is to come for both than the pirates and brigands could get for them.'

And later he found that the 'war has brought more good, with all its misery, than I could have dreamed. I am sure there is something more like a national heart of godliness amongst us than I have had any experience of in my day. The papers are horribly wicked. But God is stronger than they are, and I do not think they have succeeded in making the working-people discontented. . . . God has sent us upon the errand, if we were ever so inclined to escape, in a ship of Tarshish, and look after our commercial prosperity.'

It was not only in the churches that the war was greeted as the salvation of England. It seemed to have come just in time to redeem Englishmen from the curse of prosperity: they had begun to turn their attention from the high adventures which had made them great to the sordid calculations of the national dividend. It was, therefore, for their use of economic arguments, that Bright and Cobden were most mercilessly abused. The verses which the usually uninspired poured forth amid the first emotions of war declared that now England would show that she was not *La Nation Boutiquière*. Wealth we had in abundance; it was the spirit of the Crusades that was lacking.



ENGLAND'S WAR VIGIL.

Punch: 6 May 1854

THE TRIUMPH OF LORD PALMERSTON

'Europe', in short, 'was in full march with all its railroads and wealth, towards the condition of a larger and more civilized China.' Let England throw aside this terrible weight of comfort:

Think—war if not a crime.
Is ever a crusade: *Id Deus vult.*
But when Right's champions faint, a mean result
Kills faith through future time.

But England had lost the spirit of the Crusaders. '

Oh, rouse thee, England, worthy of thy name,
As those who love thee weep to see thee now.
Thy heart is gorged with gold: the burning thirst
By hell created, and by God accurst,
Of wealth, eternal wealth has stamped thy soul.

Would this burning thirst turn England from her sterner duties?

Peace! Peace! Peace! The vain and silly song
That we do no sin ourselves, if we wink at other's wrong,
That to turn the second cheek is the lesson of the Cross,
To be proved by calculation of profit and of loss.
Go home, you idle teachers! you miserable creatures!
The cannons are God's preachers, when the time is ripe for war.

Once again Tennyson responded to the spirit of the age. In the days of the Anti-Corn Law League he had entertained the hope of universal peace.

Till the war-drum throb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were
furl'd
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

Now he knew this had been the false teaching of the commercial pacifist.

THE EVE OF WAR

This broad-brimmed hawker of holy things,
Whose ear is cramm'd with his cotton, and rings
Even in dreams to the chink of his pence.

'The long, long canker of peace' was over. England had

. . . . Lost for a little her lust of gold,
And love of a peace that was full of wrongs and shames.

Now had come hope

. . . That a war would arise in defence of the right,
That an iron tyranny now should bend or cease,
The glory of manhood stand on his ancient height,
Nor Britain's one sole God be the millionaire:
No more shall commerce be all in all, and Peace
Pipe on her pastoral hillock a languid note.

.
For the peace, that I deem'd no peace, is over and done,
And now by the side of the Black and the Baltic deep,
And deathful-grinning mouths of the fortress, flames
The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire.

Let it flame or fade, and the war roll down like a wind
We have proved we have hearts in a cause, we are noble still,
And myself have awaked, as it seems, to the better mind;
It is better to fight for the good than to rail at the ill;
I have felt with my native land, I am one with my kind,
I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom assign'd.

There was no cause for fear. Englishmen were noble still.
Before them was a vision of triumphant wrong, and, moved by
a disinterested and generous passion, they welcomed the opportunity of fighting for the right. The vision, however, bore little or no relation to the facts, and it is perhaps a little ironical that the chivalrous desire to aid the oppressed against the tyrant should find its outlet in a war on behalf of Turkey. 'What

Englishmen condemn,' says Mr. Simpson, 'is almost always worthy of condemnation—if only it has happened.'

Nor had 'the long, long canker of peace' destroyed British courage and determination. In the winter of 1854 there was opportunity for both. The Crimean campaign showed that heroic obedience was a quality which the British soldier still possessed, however incompetent his commanders, and Lord Tennyson was soon provided with material for another poem. It also revealed that the whole system of English administration was in the hands of 'antiquated imbecility'. An indignant public discovered 'the incompetency, lethargy, aristocratic hauteur, official indifference, favour, routine, perverseness, and stupidity which revel and riot in the camp before Sevastopol'. The war was the price which Britain paid for the reform of some of these defects. In exposing them the race of war correspondents was born, and *The Times*, best served by William Howard Russell, reached the summit of its glory. At the same time a new race of women arose. Indeed, but for the horrors of Scutari, Florence Nightingale might have died unknown and England have ignored the most remarkable of her eminent Victorians. So the British character once more triumphed, though, to be sure, the triumph has had to be repeated on several subsequent occasions.

Outside Britain the results of the war were equally unexpected. Only five years after the peace had been made, *The Times* admitted that British idealism had been misplaced:

'We must frankly own that we feel somewhat more free to act like men and Christians than we could five years ago. That ill-starred war, those half-million of British, French, and Russian men left in the Crimea, those two hundred millions of money wasted in the worst of all ways, have discharged to the last iota all the debt of Christian Europe to Turkey. Never was so great an effort made for so worthless an object. It is with no small reluctance that we admit a gigantic effort and an infinite sacrifice to have been made in vain.' Historians have, for the most part, accepted this verdict. Those who have defended the

war have usually done so on the ground that it restored the balance of power and aided in the struggle for national freedom.

Russian strength, however, always greater in defence than attack, was not long crippled, and in fifteen years her fleet was again dominant in the Black Sea. A few years later, indeed, Mr. Disraeli thought it again necessary to fight the tyrant, while Mr. Gladstone, strangely enough, thought that the liberty of Turkey to massacre Bulgarians had been bought at too high a price. He even seemed willing to pay a higher one to take it away again. Lord Salisbury was even more original; he favoured the Tsar's policy of partitioning the Ottoman Empire. Turkey, however, still unreformed, even now retains her hold upon Constantinople, and her 'progressively liberal system' is still a subject of controversy and compromise among Foreign Ministers.

Indeed, the chief results of the war were not the crippling of Russia nor the strengthening of Turkey. To it may be traced the formation of independent sovereign states in the Balkans. This, though no doubt a great achievement in itself, has not seemed to all observers an unmixed blessing. Even the indirect benefit to Italian liberty, which historians have so often stressed, has not necessarily increased the sum of human happiness, and the advocacy of nationalism may lead the unwary enthusiast into surprising pitfalls. 'History, after all,' as one critic remarked, 'is an art which must not neglect the known facts.' Admittedly Count Cavour took advantage of the isolated position of neutral Austria to make the Peace of Paris a stepping-stone in the consummation of Italian unity. A little later, however, Prince Bismarck also found the weakness of Austria useful, and the temporary laying of the Russian spectre made way for a more serious menace.

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- Page 59, line 3. Cf. *Spectator*, 29 June 1850.
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- Page 76, line 29. The Whigs were Lords Lansdowne, Russell, Granville, Palmerston, Cranworth and Sir Charles Wood. The

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Page 90, line 28. Reginald Lucas, op. cit., p. 117-18.

Page 90, line 30. They were owned and edited by Edward Baldwin.

Page 91, line 6. Arthur Irwin Dasent, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 148.

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Page 91, line 16. W. F. Monypenny and G. E. Buckle, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 531.

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- Page 99, line 32. Sir Herbert Maxwell, *Life of the Fourth Earl of Clarendon* (2 vols., 1913), Vol. II, pp. 16-19.
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- Page 101, line 21. Walter Bagehot, *Biographical Studies* (1881).
- Page 101, line 27. *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 584.
- Page 103, line 12. Charles Greville, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 56.
- Page 103, line 25. *Life of Lord Aberdeen*, op. cit., pp. 70-1.
- Page 104, line 1. John Knox Laughton, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 288, quoting Aberdeen.
- Page 104, line 6. *Life of Lord Aberdeen*, op. cit., p. 86.
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- Page 105, line 28. *Eastern Papers*, p. 293, 24 June 1853.
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- Page 110, line 35. See *Leaves from the Diary of Henry Greville, 1801-72* (4 vols.), edited by Viscountess Enfield (1883-1905), Vol. II for an inside account of the affair.
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- Page 112, line 32. *Morning Post*, 21 March 1853.
- Page 113, line 12. John Knox Laughton, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 288.

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- Page 114, line 4. John Knox Laughton, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 296.
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- Page 115, line 19. Charles Greville, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 83.
- Page 115, line 33. *Bell's Life*, 24 July 1853.
- Page 116, line 4. *Reynolds's Weekly*, 20 March 1853 and 26 June 1853.
- Page 116, line 8. *The Press*, 4 June 1853.
- Page 116, line 16. *Daily News*, 28 May 1853.
- Page 116, line 19. *Bell's Life*, 3 March 1853.
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- Page 117, line 7. *The Times*, 6 June 1853.
- Page 117, line 11. John Knox Laughton, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 304-5.
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- Page 126, line 14. *Correspondence of the 4th Earl of Aberdeen*, op. cit., 27 August 1853.
- Page 126, line 17. Sir Herbert Maxwell, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 20.
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 Page 144, line 10. Cf. the account by Augustus Loftus in his *Reminiscences*, 1837–62, 1st series (2 vols., 1892).
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- Page 155, line 15. *Correspondence of the 4th Earl of Aberdeen*, op. cit., 6-9 December 1853.
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- Page 163, line 12. Report in *Reynolds's*, 11 December 1853.
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